



Neighborhoods Taking Action: A Partnership Approach to Policy and Systems Change to Improve High School Graduation Rates and Health

NEIGHBORHOODS TAKING ACTION STEERING COMMITTEE

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To Colleagues Interested in Youth Educational Achievement:

In our community, school leaders, teachers, parents, students, institutions, community-based organizations, and other concerned citizens are galvanizing efforts to improve children's success in school. We all know that a quality education is vitally important for a number of reasons - including better health. Higher levels of schooling can lead to better jobs, higher income, improved health, and longer healthier lives.

The Detroit URC is a long-established community-based participatory research partnership to improve the health and well-being of Detroiters, with the aim of eliminating racial and economic inequities in health. Our vision is to see diverse partners engaged in systems and policy change to improve student achievement in the hopes of ultimately putting students on a path toward better jobs and improved health.

To that end, we have created a toolkit of resources to assist school leaders, decision makers, educators, families and community members in their efforts to make evidence informed policy changes to improve student achievement. Enclosed with this letter you will find the following fact sheets:

- What works: A conceptual model of evidence-based factors/strategies effecting improved educational and health outcomes*
- What does Education Have to Do with Health?
- Supporting Effective School Leaders
- Parent Involvement in School Decision-Making
- Student Voice: Supporting Youth Engagement in School Decision-Making

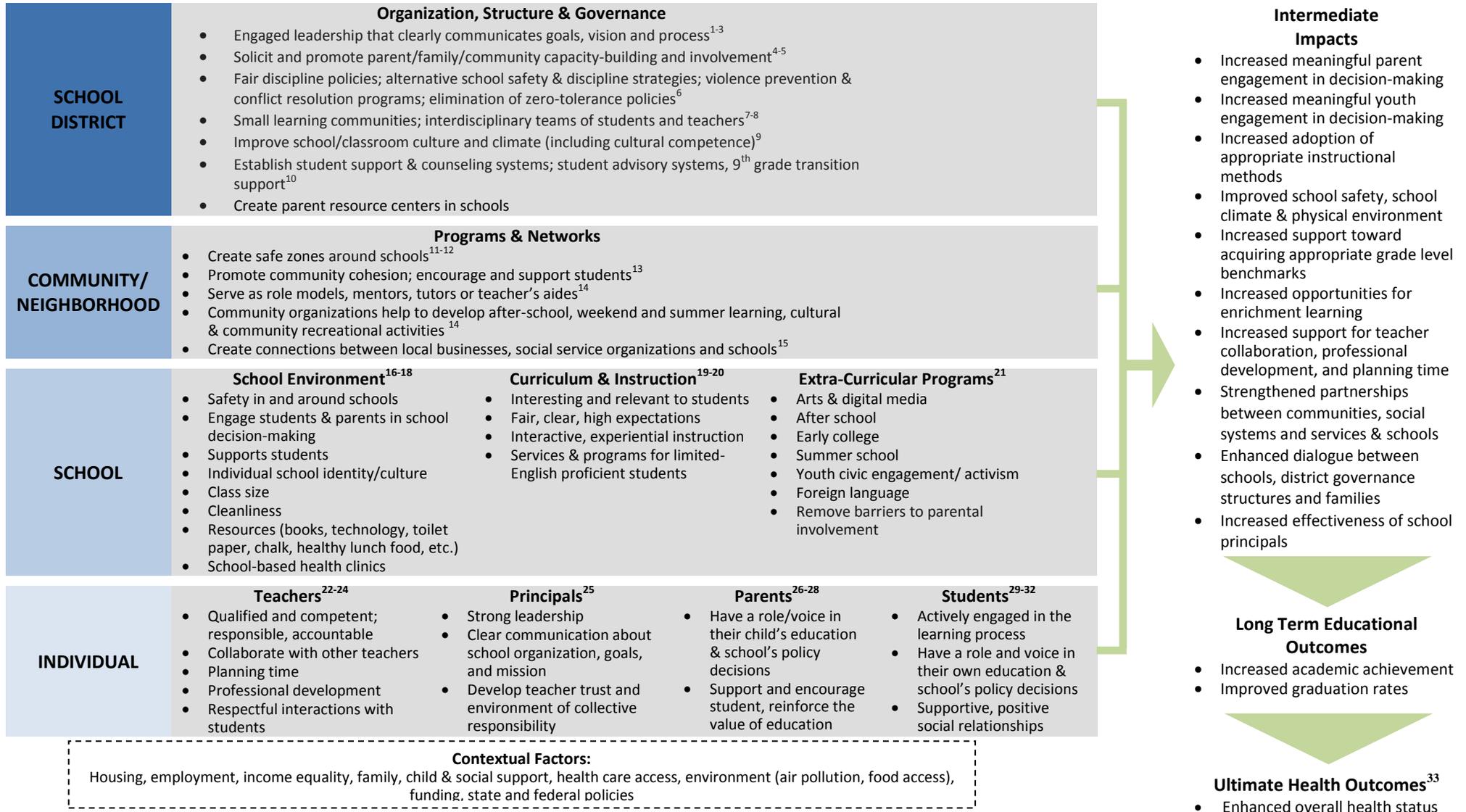
We hope these resources will be helpful to you in your efforts to work collaboratively and effectively with others to improve our schools and ultimately our children's education.

The Detroit URC is committed to policy change that improves the health and well-being of Detroit residents. We provide training, technical assistance, and hands-on tools to assist groups and individuals to organize for change in their school and community. We can also assist interested parties in developing community-based participatory research partnerships. Feel free to visit our website or contact us at 734- 763-0741.

*The conceptual model is based on an extensive literature review of over 200 references. Selected references are included in this packet. For more information and to view the others, see our website at www.detroiturc.org.



NEIGHBORHOODS TAKING ACTION:
CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF EVIDENCE-BASED FACTORS EFFECTING EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH OUTCOMES*
 June 2014



*Full references can be found on accompanying document

Neighborhoods Taking Action

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF EVIDENCE-BASED FACTORS EFFECTING EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH OUTCOMES

Resources and References – June 2014

SCHOOL DISTRICT:

Engaged leadership that clearly communicates goals, vision and process;

1. Bryk AS, Sebring PB & Allensworth E. (2010) *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
2. Blase, J., & Blase, J. (2000) Effective Instructional Leadership: Teachers' Perspective on How Principals Promote Teaching and Learning in Schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 38(2), 130-141.
3. Sanders M. (2009). Collaborating for Change: How an Urban School District and a Community-Based Organization Support and Sustain School, Family, and Community Partnerships. *Teachers College Record*, 111(7): 1693–1712.

Solicit and promote parent/family/community capacity-building and involvement

4. Bryk AS, Sebring PB & Allensworth E. (2010) *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
5. Noguera PA (2001) Transforming urban schools through investments in the social capital of parents. In S Saegert, JP Thompson & MR Warren (eds), *Social Capital and Poor Communities* (pp 189-212). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Fair discipline policies; alternative school safety & discipline strategies; violence prevention & conflict resolution programs; elimination of zero-tolerance policies;

6. Human Impact Partners (May 2012). Health Impact Assessment of School Discipline Policies: A health impact assessment of status quo discipline, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and restorative justice policies in three California school districts. Available from: <http://ccsd.net/internal/documents/resources/health-impact-assessment-of-school-discipline-policies.pdf>

Small learning communities; interdisciplinary teams of students and teachers;

7. MDRC: Quint J. (2005) *Meeting Five Critical Challenges of High School Reform: Lessons from research on three reform models*. New York, NY: MDRC.
8. Bloom HS, Thompson SL & Unterman R. (2010) Transforming the high school experience: How NYC's new small schools are boosting student achievement and graduation rates. New York, NY: MDRC. Retrieved on 7/23/2012 from: <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/560/overview.html>

Improve school/classroom culture and climate (including cultural competence);

9. Ruglis J & Freudenberg N (2010) Toward and healthy high schools movement: Strategies for Mobilizing Public Health for Educational Reform. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(9): 1565-1571.

Establish student support & counseling systems; student advisory systems, 9th grade transition support.

10. Furstenberg FF & Neumark D. (2007). Encouraging education in an urban school district: Evidence from the Philadelphia Educational Longitudinal Study. *Education Economics*, 15(2), 135-157.

COMMUNITY/NEIGHBORHOOD:

Create safe zones around schools

11. Garcia-Reid P, Reid RJ & Peterson NA. (2005) School engagement among Latino youth in an urban middle school context: Valuing the role of social support. *Education and Urban Society*, 37(3): 257-275.
12. Mohai P, Kweon B-S, Lee S & Ard K. (2011) Air Pollution Around Schools Is Linked To Poorer Student Health And Academic Performance. *Health Affairs*, 30(5): 1-11.

Promote community cohesion; encourage and support students

13. Catalano RF, Haggerty KP, Oesterle S, et al. (2004) The Importance of Bonding to School for Healthy Development: Findings from the Social Development Research Group. *Journal of School Health*, 74(7): 252-261.

Serve as role models, mentors, tutors or teachers aides

Community organizations help to develop after-school, weekend and summer learning, cultural & community recreational activities

14. Mediratta K, Shah S, McAlister S. (2008) Organized Communities, Stronger Schools: A preview of research findings. Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University. Available from: <http://annenberginstitute.org/pdf/organizedcommunities.pdf>

Create connections between local businesses, social service organizations and schools

15. Sheldon SB (2007) Improving Student Attendance with school, family, community partnerships. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 100(5): 267-275.

Neighborhoods Taking Action

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF EVIDENCE-BASED FACTORS EFFECTING EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH OUTCOMES

Resources and References – June 2014

SCHOOL:

School environment

16. Patton GC, Bond L, Carlin JB, Thomas L, et al (2006) Promoting Social Inclusion in Schools: A Group-Randomized Trial of Effects on Student Health Risk behavior and well being. *American Journal of Public Health*, 96(9): 1582-1587.
17. Balfanz R. (2012). Overcoming the Poverty Challenge to Enable College and Career Readiness for All-The crucial role of student supports. Johns Hopkins University—Center for Social Organization of Schools. Available from: http://www.cityyear.org/sites/default/files/PDF/StudentSupports_forScreenViewing.pdf
18. Jacob BA & Rockoff JE (2011) *Organizing Schools to Improve Student Achievement: Start Times, Grade Configurations, and Teacher Assignments*. The Hamilton Project-Brookings Institute. Retrieved on 7/23/2012 from: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2011/09/organization-jacob-rockoff>

Curriculum & Instruction

19. Byrk AS. (2010). Organizing schools for improvement-Five essential supports. Available from: http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/sites/default/files/elibrary/bryk_organizing-schools_pdk.pdf
20. Ferguson RF, Hackman S, Hanna R, & Ballantine A. (2010) *How High Schools Become Exemplary: Ways that Leadership Raises Achievement and Narrows Gaps by Improving Instruction in 15 Public High Schools*. Report on the 2009 Annual Conference of the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University. Retrieved on 7/24/2012 from: <http://www.agi.harvard.edu/events/2009Conference/2009AGIConferenceReport6-30-2010web.pdf>

Extra-curricular Programs:

21. Noguera PA (2001) Transforming urban schools through investments in the social capital of parents. In S Saegert, JP Thompson & MR Warren (eds), *Social Capital and Poor Communities* (pp 189-212). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

INDIVIDUAL:

Teachers

22. Rowan B, Correnti R & Miller RJ (2002) What Large-Scale Survey Research Tells Us About Teacher Effects on Student Achievement: Insights from the Prospects Study of Elementary Schools. *Teachers College Record*, 104(8): 1525–1567.
23. Jacob BA, Lefgren L & Sims DP (2010) Persistence of teacher induced learning gains. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 45(4): 915-943.
24. Darling-Hammond L. (2004). Inequality and the right to learn: Access to Qualified Teachers. *Teachers College Record*, 106(10): 1936–1966.

Principals

25. Supovitz JA, Sirinides P & May H (2010) How Principals and Peers influence teaching and learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(1) 31–56.

Parents

26. Fan X & Chen M (2001) Parental Involvement and Students' Academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1): 1-22.
27. Jeynes, W. H. (2007). The relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Urban Education*, 42(1), 82-110.
28. Marschall, M. (2006). Parent involvement and educational outcomes for Latino students. *Review of Policy Research*, 23(5), 1053-1075.

Students

29. Ginwright S, Cammarota J & Noguera P (2005) Youth, social justice and communities: Toward a theory of urban youth policy. *Social Justice*, 32(3): 24-40.
30. Joselowsky F (2005) Students as Co-constructors of the Learning experience and environment: Youth engagement and high school reform. *Voices in Urban Education*, 8: 12-22. Retrieved on 7/23/2012 from: <http://www.annenberginstitute.org/VUE/wp-content/pdf/VUE8.pdf>
31. Noguera PA (2007) How listening to students can help schools to improve. *Theory Into Practice*, 46(3), 205–211.
32. Ruglis J (2011) Mapping the biopolitics of school dropout and youth resistance. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 24(5): 627-637.

Ultimate health outcome:

33. Johnson RC. (2010) The Health Returns of Education Policies from Preschool to High School and Beyond. *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings*, 100: 188–194.

What does education have to do with health?



A GOOD EDUCATION CAN LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR A HEALTHY LIFE

NEIGHBORHOODS TAKING ACTION PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS:

CODY ROUGE COMMUNITY ACTION ALLIANCE

COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS

DETROIT HISPANIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

HENRY FORD ACADEMY-SCHOOL FOR CREATIVE STUDIES

THE SKILLMAN FOUNDATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

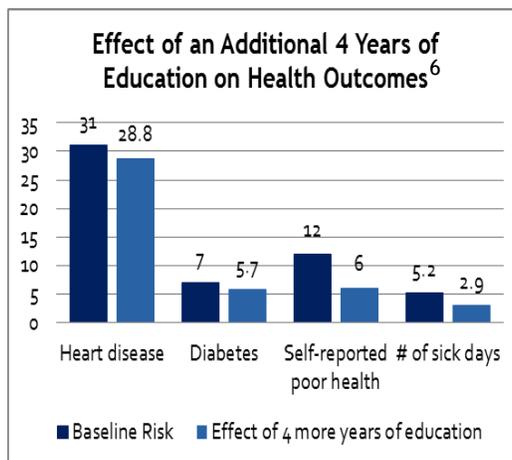
Education and Health are Related

Usually we don't think about how staying in school affects health, but the truth is, **people with higher levels of education are more likely to be healthier.** It's completing high school that actually makes the biggest difference when it comes to health.¹

What's the link?

The impact of education on health goes beyond what people learn in the classroom because health is impacted by *every corner* of a person's life. People with more education are more likely to live in safer neighborhoods where they have access to healthy foods, good schools and green space for exercise; to be employed in a well-paying job; and to have strong relationships, all of which impact how well and how long people live.²

FAST FACTS: EDUCATION AND HEALTH



Additional education results in lower rates of heart disease, diabetes, self-reported poor health, and numbers of sick days.³

Increases in wages and job security are linked to having a high school degree.⁴

Improved graduation rates would have saved 8 times as many lives as medical advances from 1996 to 2002.⁵



Education leads to a well-paying job...

- People who drop out of school are more likely to be unemployed or hold lower-paying jobs. In addition, those who do not have a high school diploma are the most likely to lose their jobs.
- People who complete high school are more likely to be paid well and to receive benefits from their job.
- A well-paying job allows people to live in safer neighborhoods that have more opportunities and resources.⁷

Education reduces stress...

- People with less education are not only more likely to be

lower paid, but they tend to experience greater stress in part because they have fewer resources like money and access to services.

- Stressful experiences have been linked to many negative health outcomes.⁸

Education builds sense of control and relationships...

- Education is linked to confidence, ability to solve problems and feeling of control over the decisions that impact one's life. This sense of control is linked to better health outcomes.
- More education helps people develop friendships and supportive

relationships, which tend to lead to healthier, longer, less stressful lives.⁹

Education teaches us how to be healthy...

- Education increases knowledge and skills. The more education, the more likely people will be able to seek out and understand health information.¹⁰

Education impacts where we live and how well we live. It impacts our health.



What is happening in Detroit?

Graduating from high school can lay the foundation for a healthy life, but too many students are dropping out and not completing high school. **In Detroit, the dropout rate has reached critical levels. 1 in 5 students does not graduate with a high school degree. That is twice the statewide average. In addition, only 3 in 5 Detroit students graduates from high school within four years.**¹¹

We can improve education. We can improve health. There are a number of things that can be done to improve high school completion, like increasing parent involvement in school, reducing class size, tutoring, and expanding school hours. Through policy and systems changes, high school graduation rates and health outcomes can be improved.

What can we do in Detroit?

Neighborhoods Taking Action (NTA) is an effort to impact health by increasing graduation rates at several of Detroit's schools. NTA provides an opportunity for students, families, school officials and other community stakeholders to work together to ensure Detroit students get a high quality education.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Detroit URC
Center Manager,
734-764-5171

Support for NTA is provided by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Roadmaps to Health Community Grants Program with matching funds provided by The Skillman Foundation and a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.



References

- ¹ RWJF Commission to Build a Healthier America. Issue Brief Series: Exploring the Social Determinants of Health: Education Matters for Health. April 2011.
- ² RWJF, 2011.
- ³ Education and Health, National Poverty Center Policy Brief #9.
- ⁴ Education and Health, National Poverty Center Policy Brief #9.
- ⁵ Woolf SH, Johnson RE, Phillips RL, Philipsen M. Giving Everyone the Health of the Educated: An Examination of Whether Social Change Would Save More Lives Than Medical Advances. *AJPH*. April 2007, 97(4): 679-683.
- ⁶ Education and Health, National Poverty Center Policy Brief #9
- ⁷ RWJF, 2011.
- ⁸ RWJF, 2011.
- ⁹ RWJF, 2011.
- ¹⁰ Education and Health, National Poverty Center Policy Brief #9; RWJF, 2011.
- ¹¹ Center for Educational Performance Information



Supporting Effective School Principals

GOAL: INCREASED OPPORTUNITY FOR PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENT AIMED AT ENHANCING CAPACITY FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP OF SCHOOLS

Research has demonstrated that school principals play a key role in the achievement of students, and that lack of effective leadership skills can have a detrimental effect on student outcomes.

Examples of Research Findings

- ◆ A survey of 800 teachers showed that having a principal that possesses transformational leadership skills supported high student achievement by modeling effective teaching techniques and positive interactions with students and also allowing teachers to have a flexible teaching style to cater to students needs without the fear of negative feedback. Transformation leadership is evidenced by the principal’s ability to mobilize instructional staff in pursuit of a common vision and by encouraging continuous improvement in teaching skills. In schools with this type of leadership, teachers exhibited increased self esteem and satisfaction in their work which have been shown to correlate with higher student achievement.¹
- ◆ A study of 24 nationally selected restructured schools found that it was not sufficient to have transformational leadership or shared instructional leadership present in isolation, but that both were necessary to improve the quality of teaching and student performance. Transformational leadership motivates others to revamp the way they do things. Shared instructional leadership seeks to improve instruction, curriculum and the assessment of students by having shared responsibility for staff development between the principal and teachers and a school leader that seeks out the opinions of other staff.²
- ◆ Urban schools in low income areas may find it a challenge to meet the demands of increasing student achievement without an increase in financial or human resources. Leveraging relationships and facilitating partnerships within the community is one strategy to address this issue. In a case study evaluating how well principals reached out to parents and community organizations, it was found that the principal’s involvement in initiating and maintaining relationships with parents and community partners was crucial for the success of those relationships. Relationships with community organizations provided opportunities for student success and increased resources (e.g. after school programs at a local church, a nonprofit foundation sponsoring a library for the school, and another local church providing school supplies to students in need).³

Rating the Research:

Scientifically Supported	
Some Evidence	
Expert Opinion	
Mixed Evidence	
Insufficient Evidence	
Evidence of Ineffectiveness	



There is some evidence that effective leadership skills on the part of the school principal are key to supporting high student achievement in schools. Principals need professional development that promotes leadership skills and provides training opportunities in a real world setting. There have been a limited number of studies evaluating how to train principals in a way that supports the development of effective leadership skills and also how these leadership skills positively influence student outcomes.

*Adapted from the County Health Rankings
 Evidence Rating: Search, Selection and Assessment
<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/roadmaps/what-works-for-health/our-methods>



Strategies

Intervention strategies that increase opportunity for principal development aimed at enhancing capacity for effective leadership of schools are summarized below.

Promising Strategies:

Principal training programs that incorporate real world experience and allow for new principals to try out their skills with more experienced mentors are associated with better prepared teachers leading to improved student outcomes.

- The Alabama State Department of Education found that there was a great need for stronger leadership in schools. In an effort to fulfill this need, Auburn University redesigned and evaluated their principal preparation program. The new program included changes such as a more rigorous admission process and “meaningful, engaged internship experiences” (pg 444). Evaluation of this program found that principals made decisions based on data, were more involved in the process of improving their schools, and had student achievement as a focus of their work.⁴ Incorporating mentorship and other hands on trainings allows developing principals to reach their full potential and be ready to step into their role as influential leaders.

Principals who support teacher development and growth help teachers to improve instructional practices and thus positively affect student achievement.

- The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development conducted a study examining differences in staff between high achieving schools and low achieving schools, and found some key differences in principal leadership between the two levels of achievement. Within the higher achieving schools, there was a more collaborative approach to decision making, principals provided more direction and support to staff, and there was a higher level of implementation of strategies learned from staff development opportunities.⁵
- Principal leadership is a significant predictor of improvement in teacher instructional practice. Elementary and middle school teachers in a majority African American mid-sized urban district were asked about their perceptions of principal leadership. The survey results determined that principals who support teachers’ instructional practice are able to indirectly affect student outcomes by allowing the teachers to make necessary and impactful instructional changes.⁶

Strategies Not (as thoroughly) Tested:

Potential principal candidates are evaluated on how they fit with the school and their leadership skills.

- A study that looked at what factors a superintendent considers when hiring principals found that superintendents could improve hiring practices by identifying candidates in a purposeful and evidence-based way. Marzano, Waters and McNulty identified 21 qualities in principals that have been shown to lead to high student achievement and should be strong factors in leadership hiring decisions.^{7,8}

For more information, please visit the Detroit URC website at www.detroiturc.org or call the Detroit URC Center Manager at (734) 764-5171.



Notes

¹ Blase, J., & Blase, J. (2000) Effective Instructional Leadership: Teachers' Perspective on How Principals Promote Teaching and Learning in Schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 38(2), 130-141.

² Marks, H. M., Printy, S. M. (2003) Principal Leadership and School Performance: An Integration of Transformational and Instructional Leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly* 39(3), 370-397.

³ Sanders, M. G, Harvey., A. (2002) Beyond the School Walls: A Case Study of Principal Leadership for School-Community Collaboration. *Teachers College Record*, 104(17), 1345-1368

⁴ Reams, E. (2010) Shifting Paradigms: Redesigning a Principal Preparation Program's Curriculum. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education* 5(12.5), 436-458

⁵ Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development*. Alexandria, VA, USA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development (ASCD). (page #'s?)

⁶ Supovitz, J., Sirinides P., May, H. (2010) How Principals and Peers Influence Teaching and Learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly* 46(1), 31-56

⁷ Robert A. Rammer (2007) Call to Action for Superintendents: Change the Way You Hire Principals, *The Journal of Educational Research*, 101(2), 67-76

⁸ Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School Leadership that Works: From Research to Results*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. 1703 North Beauregard Street, Alexandria, VA 22311-1714.



Parent Engagement in School Decision-Making

GOAL: INCREASE MEANINGFUL PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEVEL DECISION-MAKING

A large body of research has demonstrated that parent involvement has a positive effect on their child’s educational process and is reflected in improved academic outcomes.^{1,2} Research has also demonstrated that parents who seek to have a broader influence by participating in school decision-making processes can also affect the students’ academic outcomes.^{3,4,6}

Examples of Research Findings:

- ◆ In cities where governance and parent engagement reforms have been instituted, significant gains in student achievement have been recorded, as well as increases in parent satisfaction with the quality of the school.^{4,5}
- ◆ Strong parent-community-school ties were distilled as essential components to advancing student achievement in a 7-year study of over 400 schools in Chicago. 40% of schools with strong parent involvement improved substantially in reading, 42% of schools with strong parent involvement improved substantially in math, and 24% of schools improved in attendance.⁶
- ◆ When parents are involved in school governance, they gain the organizational capacity to exert control and hold schools accountable, in some cases resulting in improvements in student achievement.⁴

Rating the Research:

Scientifically Supported	
Some Evidence	
Expert Opinion	
Mixed Evidence	
Insufficient Evidence	
Evidence of Ineffectiveness	



Parent engagement in school governance and decision-making has not been as rigorously evaluated as parent engagement in their child’s educational process (e.g. helping them with their homework). Additionally, language barriers, work schedules and a sense of disenfranchisement have generally resulted in lower level of visible parent involvement (e.g. volunteering, attending parent-teacher conferences, involvement in PTA/LSC meetings), suggesting that the definition and types of parent involvement traditionally measured by researchers should be expanded to include other strategies that low-income parents use to support their children’s education.

*Adapted from the County Health Rankings
Evidence Rating: Search, Selection and Assessment
<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/roadmaps/what-works-for-health/our-methods>



Strategies

Effective and promising intervention strategies to increase meaningful parent engagement in school and district-level decision making are summarized here.

Effective Strategies:

Higher levels of Latino representation on Local School Councils (LSCs) was associated with greater teacher awareness of the cultural and community issues of their students and more school efforts to engage parents and forge stronger parent–school relations.⁵

→ The effect of teacher awareness of cultural and community issues translated into a 9.6 percentage point increase in the share of Latino students meeting/exceeding standards in reading and a 24.1 percentage point increase in students meeting/exceeding standards in math.⁵

Schools in which LSCs employed focused strategies to improve parent involvement and community relations had significantly higher levels of parent involvement in schools.⁵

→ The effect of school efforts to foster greater parent–school relations translated into a 7.8 percentage point increase in the share of Latino students meeting/exceeding standards in reading and a 14.1 percentage point increase in students meeting/exceeding standards in math.⁵

Promising Strategies:

Urban schools with strong family engagement programs used a diverse set of strategies to involve parents in decision-making, governance and advocacy:

- In a study of charter schools, strategies included parent focus groups to help shape school policies, parent surveys to gauge satisfaction and plan new activities, and having parents sit on the school’s governing board. These strategies were linked with increasing parent’s self-efficacy and comfort level in participating in their children’s education.⁷
- Other strategies school districts found to raise student achievement and empower parents include: establishing an Office of Parent Relations to coordinate communication between the school district and parents; creating Parent Centers in neighborhoods; organizing community-based mobilizations (marches, conferences and rallies) to generate active parent participation in school and district wide affairs; having a parent PTA representative on the superintendent’s cabinet; and organizing a citywide parent empowerment conference that attracted more than 800 parents each year.⁴

Schools must also reduce structural barriers that prevent parent participation by providing transportation, child care and language translation.^{4,5}

- One study found that providing parents with opportunities to get involved at school and having contact with teachers was associated with the level of parent involvement in school related activities.⁸

Finally, commitment to developing partnerships between schools and parents based on mutual accountability and responsibility, and recognizing the need to enhance the capacity of parents were common themes across multiple studies of parent empowerment.^{4,9}

- High levels of achievement are made possible through organized cooperation between teachers and parents.¹⁰
- Efforts to organize and empower parents as decision-makers and advocates have been shown to contribute to the improvement of schools and communities.^{11,6}



Notes

- ¹ Jeyes (2003) A Meta-Analysis : The Effects of Parental Involvement on Minority Children's Academic Achievement
- ² Fan X & Chen M (2001) Parental Involvement and Students' Academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1): 1-22.
- ³ Cooper CW & Christie CA. (2005). Evaluating parent empowerment: A look at the potential of social justice evaluation in education. *Teachers College Record*, 107(10): 2248–2274.
- ⁴ Noguera PA (2001) Transforming urban schools through investments in the social capital of parents. In S. Saegert, JP Thompson, MR Warren (Eds), *Social Capital and Poor Communities* (pp189-212). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- ⁵ Marshall (2006) Parent involvement and educational outcomes for Latino students. *Review of Policy Research*, 23(5): 1053-1076; Also Marshall (2005): Marschall, M. J. (2005). Minority incorporation and local school boards. In W. Howell (Ed.), *Besieged: School boards and the future of education politic*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- ⁶ Bryk AS, Sebring PB & Allensworth E. (2010) *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
- ⁷ Smith et al (2011) Parent Involvement in Urban Charter Schools- New Strategies for Increasing Participation. *The School Community Journal*, 21(1): 71-94.
- ⁸ McKay et al (2003) Inner-City African American Parental Involvement in children's schooling: Racial socialization and social support from the parent community. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 32(1/2): 107-114.
- ⁹ Terrion JL (2006) Building social capital in vulnerable families: Success markers of a school-based intervention program. *Youth & Society*, 38(2): 155-176.
- ¹⁰ Fischer C, Hout M, Jankowski SL, et al. (1996) *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- ¹¹ Hess Jr AG (1995). *Restructuring Urban Schools: A Chicago Perspective*. New York: Teachers College Press.

For more information, please visit the Detroit URC website at www.detroiturc.org or call the Detroit URC Center Manager at (734) 764-5171.



Student Voice

GOAL: INCREASED MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

Meaningful youth engagement is defined as: *When young people are taken seriously as active participants and valued partners with adults in both their own education and decisions that affect the academic and social climate and culture of their learning environment.*¹ There is some evidence, largely anecdotal, about the importance of youth engagement and participation in school and community settings.² There is more evidence that when youth are meaningfully engaged, they gain psychological and behavioral benefits such as higher self-esteem or self-concept, sense of belonging, sense of purpose, reduced delinquency, and greater community participation.

Examples of Research Findings:

- ◆ Students have key developmental needs met through opportunities to express their voices and meaningfully participate in school. These needs include: developing the belief that they can transform themselves and institutions that affect them; gaining competence in various areas such as research methods, communications and critical thinking; and finding a sense of belonging through meaningful connections with caring adults and peers³.
- ◆ Participation in school-based leadership activities such as student council is positively linked to liking school and has predicted college attendance⁴.
- ◆ One study focused on the benefits of youth participation on adults and organizations and found that working with youth enhanced the energy and commitment of adults, and having young people as decision makers often brings clarity and focus to the organization’s mission⁵.

Rating the Research:

Scientifically Supported	Green
Some Evidence	Light Green
Expert Opinion	Light Blue
Mixed Evidence	Yellow
Insufficient Evidence	Orange
Evidence of Ineffectiveness	Red



Some evidence in support of youth voice and participation exists, but it has not yet been given sufficient attention in the literature. The literature on youth engagement is often descriptive and highlights examples where the practice was beneficial in improving relevant outcomes, based on a specific intervention (see examples below). From a developmental perspective, youth engagement or participation in decision-making has been shown to provide psychological and behavioral benefits (e.g. sense of belonging, competence). The study of youth engagement and voice is a developing field with great potential for further growth. What we do know, based on the evidence, is that when youth are valued and empowered, not only do they experience various psychological benefits (e.g. increased self-concept) but the involved adults and institutions can also be positively affected as well.

*Adapted from the County Health Rankings
 Evidence Rating: Search, Selection and Assessment
<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/roadmaps/what-works-for-health/our-methods>

Strategies

This section summarizes promising intervention strategies to increase meaningful youth engagement in decision-making for policy change both directly in schools and on issues that affect schools, which can be addressed by community organizations.

Promising Strategies:

Schools deliberately and meaningfully incorporate youth in school and district-wide reform efforts.

- One school designed a model allowing students to **practice democratic self-governance** in weekly town meetings. To facilitate this, the school divided into clusters, meeting as a whole and in small groups once a week to discuss issues, decide cluster activities, propose school improvements, and recommend policies. The students tackled issues ranging from improving the quality of the food service to proposing and implementing school climate changes to fostering more effective inclusion of foreign-born students within the school¹.
- Another form of youth governance is a strategy in which youth participate in school and district-wide reform efforts **in partnership with adults**. In this model, students **participate in governance decisions** about policies and procedures by serving on the Board of Directors and Board Committees⁶. This strategy aligns with the idea of having “youth-driven spaces”, which promotes youth development through skill building. Benefits for students include heightened self-confidence and a sense of potential to succeed⁷.

Schools and communities form youth participatory action research (YPAR) groups to address student issues and concerns.

- Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is a participatory approach that involves youth in identifying, researching, and working to resolve social problems (e.g., poverty, poor educational attainment) that affect them, their peers, and their communities. YPAR enhances individual and group competencies and skills, engages youth in meaningful work, and incorporates them into transformational activities that help them to re-vision themselves and their communities empowered and with increased opportunity for advancement. This type of youth involvement **provides opportunities for young people to improve their social conditions** and those of their peers⁸. One YPAR intervention, The Youth Action Research for Prevention, **utilized youth empowerment** as the cornerstone of a multi-level intervention designed to reduce and/or delay onset of drug and sex risk, while increasing individual and collective efficacy* and educational expectations. A quasi-experimental evaluation showed that the intervention improved social cohesion and collective-efficacy, while shifting peer norms about drug disapproval in a positive direction⁹. [**Individual efficacy – one’s belief in one’s ability to succeed in specific situations. Collective efficacy – a group’s shared belief in its capacity to work together towards a common goal.*]

Community-based organizations adopt youth friendly policies that invite young people to be involved in community-based efforts, at all levels (e.g., strategizing, decision-making, implementing).

- Partnerships between youth and adults represent an innovation in community development work¹⁰. Community organizations can create boards that allow for **youth governance at the neighborhood level**. This practice is most effective when not done in a token fashion—that is, having a youth on the board for show—but rather when a number of youth are given positions of influence and when their ideas are listened to and taken seriously by the adult partners. Adult domination (intended or unintended) has been shown to be detrimental to efforts to include youth in governance⁷.
- School issues can be addressed from outside the school when youth are involved with youth-friendly community-based organizations. For example, in Philadelphia, youth are organizing against corporations and politicians that want to privatize the public school system. Youth and their adult allies have succeeded in keeping some local control over the schools by **combining sound research and direct action**. In one case they prevented a for-profit corporation seeking access to public dollars from taking over the entire school system¹¹.

Notes

¹ Joselowsky, F. (2007). Youth engagement, high school reform, and improved learning outcomes: Building systemic approaches for youth engagement. *NASSP Bulletin*, 91(3), 257-276.

² Scales, P., & Leffert, N. (1999). *Developmental assets: A synthesis of the scientific research on adolescent development*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute.

³ Mitra, D. (2004). The significance of students: can increasing" student voice" in schools lead to gains in youth development?. *The Teachers College Record*, 106(4), 651-688.

⁴ Eccles, J. S., & Barber, B. L. (1999). Student Council, Volunteering, Basketball, or Marching Band What Kind of Extracurricular Involvement Matters?. *Journal of adolescent research*, 14(1), 10-43.

⁵ Zeldin, S., McDaniel, A. K., Topitzes, D., & Calvert, M. (2000). *Youth in decision-making: A study on the impacts of youth on adults and organizations* (p. 68). Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council.

⁶ What is so important about being "youth-driven"?: A white paper on youth voice and leadership *Neutral Zone Publication*

⁷ Cook-Sather, A. (2007). What would happen if we treated students as those with opinions that matter? The benefits to principals and teachers of supporting youth engagement in school. *NASSP Bulletin*, 91(4), 343-362.

⁸ Schensul, J. J., Berg, M. J., Schensul, D., & Sydlo, S. (2004). Core elements of participatory action research for educational empowerment and risk prevention with urban youth. *Practicing Anthropology*, 26(2), 5-9.

⁹ Berg, M., Coman, E., & Schensul, J. J. (2009). Youth action research for prevention: A multi-level intervention designed to increase efficacy and empowerment among urban youth. *American journal of community psychology*, 43(3-4), 345-359.

¹⁰ Camino, L. A. (2000). Youth-adult partnerships: Entering new territory in community work and research. *Applied Developmental Science*, 4(S1), 11-20.

¹¹ Delgado, M., & Staples, L. (2008). *Youth-led community organizing*. New York: Oxford University Press.

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