

Fixing Failing Schools

Building Family and Community Demand for Dramatic Change

Lucy Steiner and Dana Brinson, May 2011



PUBLIC IMPACT



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The Challenge



In communities across the country, education leaders often face serious opposition when they take dramatic action in persistently failing schools. Dramatic actions include **closing low-performing schools, replacing principals and staff members, hiring external operators** to turn around low-performing schools, and **opening new schools** to replace or compete with low-performing schools. In many cases, a lack of trust and a history of poor communication between education leaders and communities are to blame.

Purpose of This Report



Despite decades of effort, far too many students attend persistently failing schools. In this presentation, we address the following issues:

- Why building demand for dramatic change among families and communities is a challenge
- Why building demand for change is worth the effort
- Specific barriers leaders need to tackle
- Effective strategies for overcoming barriers and building demand for change



Research Process

The findings highlighted in this presentation are based on a review of the research on effective parent and community engagement, and 28 interviews with leaders and officials from:

- Community-based organizations
- Seven urban school districts (Chicago, Philadelphia, Denver, Baltimore, New Orleans, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.)
- School turnaround organizations
- Charter school operators
- Faith-based organizations
- Philanthropic foundations



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The public engagement paradox

“Everyone wants change, as long as it doesn’t affect them in any way.”

Dr. Andres Alonso, CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools

Community with numerous failing schools has little exposure to what best schools look like or how their schools stack up against the best schools



Announcement of school closure or other dramatic action in response to persistent school failure



Community outrage and resistance



MAJOR TAKEAWAYS

Major takeaways

*“When communities don't understand the purpose of a change, it is because they are **unaware that there's a problem**. If that's the case, any change **seems to happen all of a sudden**. It's just that the reality has been hidden from the community for a long time.”*

Pastor Walter Matthews
Pleasant Green Missionary Baptist Church
Chicago, Illinois



Major takeaways

- **Know where you are headed**
 - Education leaders and their partners need to agree on the end goal of schooling and what this looks like—they need to have a shared vision of quality schooling.
- **Show community members what is possible, which also helps them see how far their own schools fall short**
 - Parents and community members don't necessarily have experience with high-quality schools, so reform advocates (e.g., education leaders and their partners) need to *show* them what is possible, such as through school visits and personal testimony.
 - This is a powerful way for education leaders and their partners to convince parents that change is necessary—better than statistics and data they may not believe or trust.

“Too much data can engender mistrust. They think we're hiding things in the data.”
—Yana Smith,
Denver Public Schools



Major takeaways

“Try to figure out the most human way to have a conversation.

People in general don’t much care if it is a district or charter school as long as it is a good school.”

—Joshua Edelman,
D.C. Public Schools

- **Recognize importance of building trust**
 - Community members should have time to get to know those driving the effort, especially the people who will interact with their children. This helps break down natural skepticism.
- **Don’t introduce a loss (e.g., school closure, turnaround that removes a principal) without explaining how you will replace it with something better**
 - Closure and turnaround efforts need to be closely aligned with replacement efforts (e.g., new schools, new principal, new staff).
- **Focus on quality. Labels are less important than idea of what a good school looks like**
 - Labels like “charter” and “turnaround” can be lightning rods for controversy and don’t mean much to communities—better to focus on quality regardless of label.



Major takeaways

“I would never go to the first meeting; no matter what the conversation was, it was not productive. I came in later meetings to be a closer in the situation. Sometimes it took three conversations until we thought it would be the best use of my influence.”
—District superintendent

- **Early on, be transparent and clear about the decision-making role of the community**
 - Whatever change you are introducing, if you are giving the community a role, make it genuine, and explain limitations of that role early on.
- **Vet choices so all choices drive positive change**
 - Regardless of the role of the community in decision making (e.g., advisory vs. deciders), vet options so all choices achieve desired outcomes for school improvement .
- **Use impact and influence strategies skillfully**
 - Use community partners where helpful, deploy political capital sparingly, and communicate frequently with key influencers so they are briefed as effort evolves.



Major takeaways

- **Counter critics by touting successes**
 - From the beginning, be vigilant in identifying and disseminating information about successes, in both public engagement (e.g., critical role of community members in selecting school operator) and in the overall school improvement effort. **“Early wins” are an effective way to silence critics.**
- **Manage expectations**
 - This is extremely challenging, but reform leaders need to indicate that school reform takes time and that there will be setbacks, and then be transparent about results.
 - If they do not see early indicators of significant progress in student learning, leaders need to be willing to admit this and change course. If seeing **early wins**, disseminate information widely.



WHY BUILDING DEMAND FOR CHANGE IS A CHALLENGE FOR LEADERS



Why building demand for change is a challenge for leaders

“Because it is based outside schools, is focused on accountability, and is demanding of improved performance, school administrators and teachers may see organizing as threatening and hard to control.”

—A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement

- **It takes time to engage families and communities in major change efforts**
 - A theme repeated again and again in the research literature and in interviews was that building relationships is critical to effective engagement. This poses a problem for leaders who are on an urgent timeline to make rapid changes in low-performing schools.
- **Involving families and communities carries risks**
 - Effective community engagement requires giving community members some level of control over the direction of the effort. Otherwise, there is little reason for people to genuinely engage. This poses a dilemma for education leaders who want to make dramatic changes and are concerned that community members won't agree that bold action is necessary.



WHY BUILDING DEMAND FOR CHANGE IS WORTH THE EFFORT



Why building demand for change is worth the effort

“When families and communities organize to hold poorly performing schools accountable, studies suggest that school districts make positive changes in policy, practice, and resources.”
—*A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*

- **Improves student outcomes**
 - Multiple research studies conducted over several years have found a convincing relationship between family involvement and positive student outcomes, including improved academic achievement, higher test scores, better social skills, and improved behavior.
 - Recent studies of emerging efforts to organize parent and community members to improve low-performing schools have shown that these efforts have contributed to changes in policy, resources, personnel, school culture, and educational programs.
- **Provides direction for leaders who have the will to make dramatic changes**
 - Education leaders who have the will to make dramatic changes in low-performing schools still have to decide what exactly to do. Listening to family and community members who are committed to change can provide direction.



Why building demand for change is worth the effort

“Our goal was to run an old-school organizing campaign to build parent leadership that can hold schools accountable over time.

We wanted to essentially unionize parents so they can demand and sustain changes over time. That’s the only way this could work.”

**—Ben Austin,
Parent Revolution,
Los Angeles, CA**

- **Gives leaders legitimacy in the face of opposition**
 - Parental and community support has the potential to provide critical support and legitimacy for dramatic change strategies. In cases where community members have demanded dramatic changes in low-performing schools, opponents of change find it difficult to argue against the will of the community.
- **Improves sustainability**
 - Once a change effort has been implemented, leadership transitions and other challenges often threaten its sustainability. It is easier to keep major change efforts on track if community members are engaged and support the effort.



SPECIFIC BARRIERS LEADERS NEED TO TACKLE



Specific barriers leaders need to tackle

“We have to have a strong dose of humility in this work, because the work is hard and because communities often don’t trust us initially. They have been fed so much disinformation day in and day out that trust takes time.”

—Howard Fuller,
Black Alliance for
Educational Options

- **Lack of trust**
 - Level of trust varies depending on how communities have been engaged (or not engaged) in past decision making, but interviewees reported that lack of trust is frequently an issue, particularly in low-income communities where there is an overall dearth of resources.
- **History of past failure**
 - If past efforts to improve schools did not succeed, community members are unlikely to believe current efforts will work.
- **Lack of evidence**
 - Many dramatic change efforts are relatively new or have been poorly implemented in the past (e.g., school turnarounds, charter schools), which can increase community skepticism .



Specific barriers leaders need to tackle

“Every time the district announces school closures, it’s a disaster. People in the community often end up standing up against the closure. They treat the school like it’s the victim, rather than the students being the victims of the low-performing school for years.”

—**Joe Williams**
Democrats for Education Reform

- **Organized opposition**
 - Because most dramatic change efforts upset established interests, (e.g., replacing principals and teachers, closing schools, hiring non-union teachers) those interests are likely to organize against the change and use their access and influence with parents to organize them to oppose changes as well.
- **Perception of powerlessness**
 - When community members feel that the power dynamic is one-sided—when those in authority have all the power and they have very little—then they are more likely to decide it isn’t worth their time and effort to get involved.



Specific barriers leaders need to tackle

“Often, education reform organizations provide a weak value proposition for families to get involved. Parents may not see the direct connection between their experience in schools and some of the issues that we think are important, such as alternative teacher certification.

So we seek greater engagement of families and communities around the parts of our work that resonate most directly with them, and work to articulate the connection between policy change and improving school experiences on the ground.”

**—Alex Johnston,
ConnCAN**

- **Benefits of participation not clear**
 - When the benefits to a specific individual aren’t clear (e.g., not sure how a school change effort will affect one’s own child, not sure about characteristics of a high-performing school), it is hard to persuade parents and community members to become advocates for change.
- **Action needed requires too much effort**
 - Parents can engage in a continuum of activities (e.g., increasing their understanding of the issues vs. advocating publicly for dramatic change). Most people have competing priorities and have difficulty committing to high levels of involvement.



EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING BARRIERS AND BUILDING DEMAND FOR CHANGE

Effective strategies for overcoming barriers and building demand for change

1. Assess political landscape
2. Develop a coherent strategy
3. Identify audiences
4. Identify messengers
5. Build trust with families and communities
6. Justify hopefulness, communicate reality
7. Define stakeholder roles
8. Measure success
9. Sustain the momentum



ASSESS POLITICAL LANDSCAPE



1. Assess political landscape

- **Assess past history and current political landscape**
 - Most organizations (e.g., school districts, educational support organizations, charter school management organizations, community-based organizations) have their own history and relationship with particular communities, so it is important to assess that history. Start by asking questions about barriers that could affect your engagement effort:
 - How familiar are community members with your organization?
 - Will the community see you as an ally based on past work?
 - Are there historical conflicts between your organization and the community?
 - What is the power dynamic between your organization and the community?



DEVELOP A COHERENT STRATEGY



2. Develop a coherent strategy

“We split the city into 19 analytic zones and captured knowledge about each zone. We wanted to create a portfolio of options in each zone that ensures that regardless of who the kids are, they come to us. It’s been very successful in reversing a four-decade trend of declining enrollment; we’ve had two years of growth.”

**—Dr. Andres Alonso,
Baltimore City
Public Schools**

- **Agree on the end goal for school improvement**
 - Without a common understanding of where the change effort will lead, disagreements among education leaders, community members, parents, and third-party organizations will result in further disconnect with communities.
- **Collect data to guide both your school improvement and your public engagement strategy**
 - Use quantitative data related to school performance and qualitative data gathered from meetings and conversations with the community to guide your effort. A knowledge of local issues both within and beyond school doors is necessary.



2. Develop a coherent strategy

“[Our district administration] has lacked a clear, targeted, proactive strategy to get our side of the story out. Rather, we were more reactive and came off sounding like a kid who’s saying, ‘I didn’t do it, Mommy, I swear!’”
—**District official**

- **Develop a coherent, citywide plan for student improvement**
 - A coherent community engagement strategy begins with a coherent school improvement strategy. Coordinate district processes around closing, new school development, chartering, turnaround, etc., rather than separating efforts across departments.
 - Without this coordination, efforts will flag, messaging will appear disjointed, and conspiracy theories will flourish.
- **Build demand for dramatic change by increasing community knowledge and trust**
 - A coherent public engagement strategy works on two fronts simultaneously: build public understanding of what is possible and how far current schools fall short, and build trust that education leaders have the will and a plan to deliver better-quality schooling.



IDENTIFY AUDIENCES



3. Identify audiences

- **Can be challenging to identify who represents the community. One way to approach is to think in “layers”:**
 - **At school level**, older students, staff, and parents. Staff are important because they filter everything; parents are difficult to engage, often need to develop relationship to get them involved.
 - **At neighborhood level**, faith-based leaders, community-based organization leaders, political leaders, people who have opted out of public schools, “mavericks” who have influence and can get message out.
 - **At city level**, professional people who are familiar with reform efforts, city council members, politicians, faith leaders, activists, union leaders.

“Whoever is not in the room feels like a part of the community that has been ignored.”

—**Dr. Andres Alonso,**
Baltimore City
Public Schools



3. Identify audiences

“I’m pretty good at identifying the fire starters in the room. I’ve learned the loudest voices don’t always represent the majority. I pull out my natural leaders, pull out those who are there to cause tension, and meet with these individuals one-on-one offline.”
—Yana Smith,
Denver Public Schools

- **Keep going back to naysayers—if they become supporters, can be your most persuasive advocates**
 - Know who they are and let them know what you’re doing. Even if they won’t be allies, having open lines of communication can develop a respectful disagreement.
- **Positive results can neutralize naysayers who might otherwise sabotage efforts**
 - Overcoming naysayers (especially organized groups) is extremely challenging. In the few places this has been done successfully, it happens when community sees early positive results.
- **Combine public meetings with one-on-one meetings to address and build support from key influencers**
 - Engage leaders from community meetings—e.g., those who ask thoughtful, probing questions—on a deeper level. Talk to them offline, hear their ideas, and involve them in more intensive work.



IDENTIFY MESSENGERS



4. Identify messengers

“Parents who feel they have a voice in newly restructured schools want to go out and be evangelists for us. It lends credibility for these parents to talk to parents in schools slated for turnaround.”
—Don Feinstein,
Academy of Urban
School Leadership

- **Hire full-time, dedicated staff to engage communities**
 - Create a position (or office) within your organization that is specifically dedicated to building community demand for change.
 - Identify and hire people with very strong interpersonal skills who can interact with (rather than talk at) community members
 - Guard against selecting people who are too charismatic or “slick” because they may alienate skeptical stakeholders.
- **Recognize your messengers’ “calling cards” in the community and use them to good effect. These include:**
 - Experience (e.g., opened schools before)
 - Who they are (e.g., race, ethnicity, local roots)
 - Expertise (e.g., data analysis)
 - What they bring to the table (e.g., school operator bringing engaged, responsive teachers to the community)
 - Their titles (e.g., having heavy hitters from district and city at meetings validates the process).



4. Identify messengers

“First we bring in kids from our other schools who are thoughtful, well-spoken—that impresses communities. Then bringing in parents, next is teachers. Mucky-mucks care about me or board members—but the average person doesn’t care about Dr. Beth Purvis.”
—Beth Purvis, Chicago International School

- **Regardless of change you are introducing, strategically enlist the following messengers (listed in order of importance) who can *show* skeptical audience what change will look like:**
 - Articulate students from successful schools
 - Parents from similar schools or schools managed by same organization
 - Teachers and principal who will be interacting directly with children
 - Local political leaders (e.g., alderman, city council member) and faith-based leaders
 - Heavy hitters from district to show effort has political support



BUILD TRUST WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES



5. Build trust with families and communities

“If you’re going to try to rush the process and are not genuine in your efforts to engage the community, you may as well save your time and theirs.”

Yana Smith, Denver Public Schools

“Break bread with them. It takes three meetings for people to see you're genuine. First time, they're angry and mistrustful. Second time, they appreciate you coming, but still tough. Third time, it starts to sink in that you're serious. It's like this because for the last 30 years people have come for great speeches once and didn't come back.”

Marshall Tuck, Partnership for Los Angeles Schools



5. Build trust with families and communities

“In my first year, I went to 120 PTA meetings. I placed a huge emphasis on going to every school that we were seeking to improve and listening to the community’s concerns. This allowed me to come back later and say, ‘This is what I heard, here is how we’re responding to that concern.’ That gave our district a lot of credibility.”

**—Dr. Andres Alonso,
Baltimore City
Public Schools**

- **Recognize and deeply understand reasons for mistrust**
 - Mistrust differs depending on history of each city, but it is important to know that history (e.g., in Chicago, community mistrust linked to violence that followed school closures, fears of gentrification; in Baltimore, community members strongly identify with school buildings—have long history in the community; in Philadelphia, failed history of for-profit entities running schools)
- **Build political capital as you are gathering data**
 - Meet with community stakeholders in multiple venues—at public meetings, one-on-one meetings, religious congregations, coffee dates, and playgrounds.
 - Listen carefully and record stakeholder concerns, hopes, past disappointments.
 - Be responsive—answer calls promptly, show up on time.
 - Make public meetings fun and accessible—feed people, hold in the evenings when people can attend, have translators.



5. Build trust with families and communities

“I have heard parents react to this sense of urgency the district has all of a sudden when a lot of parents have cried out for change in schools for a long time...It's important to look at what happened, and get a sense from the community about their desires.”
—Chicago community organizer

- **Recognize the trust takes time--don't emphasize urgency over relationships**
 - With families, many interviewees stressed balancing (or even tempering message so you don't stress) the sense of urgency about reform with desire to build rapid community support for change efforts (e.g., interviewees mentioned timeframe of six months to a year).
 - Ideally, get into communities early and often, long before a decision is made (e.g., Philadelphia and Denver used citywide steering committee to establish criteria for decision making; district role was to apply these criteria fairly and recommend action).
 - Real trust is built through results. May not happen until parents and student experience “new” school.



5. Build trust with families and communities

“There was apprehension, but what they heard from AUSL was the philosophy, then they started seeing the physical improvements to buildings, then when the school opened, there was excitement. Everything from then to this day is history—teachers were excited about teaching and ignited that passion in students; discipline improved.”

**—Pastor Walter Matthews
Pleasant Green Missionary
Baptist Church**

- **Publicize public engagement successes—“early wins” —widely**
 - Before decision is made, publicize critical role of community as it evolves (e.g., in Philadelphia, lots of press coverage about role of neighborhood committees in choosing new school operators).
 - When decision is announced, connect to community concerns (e.g., in Baltimore, used community feedback to prioritize school actions—you want a high-performing high school, and that is our priority as well).
 - After decision made, invite critics to experience schools for themselves and then ask them to be advocates (e.g., a man who filed a lawsuit about a local school council being displaced by an Academy of Urban School Leadership school was given an opportunity to volunteer in the new school. He later admitted that AUSL was doing a good job after he’d seen the school’s positive results during his volunteer work).



**JUSTIFY HOPEFULNESS,
COMMUNICATE REALITY**



6. Justify hopefulness, communicate reality

“Being negative and communicating HOPELESSNESS is the biggest concern I have. If you're not inviting people to a process that has the future of the community at heart, that can really just place a bombshell on people.”

Pastor Walter Matthews,

Pleasant Green Missionary Baptist Church

“Until last year, we had large, all-community meetings and we’d share data about how horrible the schools were. We didn’t come with our plans to fix the schools, or plans to engage the community in our turnaround efforts. We’d deliver the harsh news, then go home. It was a disaster.”

Yana Smith,
Denver Public Schools



6. Justify hopefulness, communicate reality

“In my mind every single council member should have been required to visit an example of every school that was an option. This process absolutely changed minds. There were some people who went to Mastery schools and were shocked at how great the schools were.”

—Tim Field, formerly with Philadelphia Public Schools

- **Need to *show* community members what is possible**
 - School visits to high-performing schools described repeatedly as most effective way to change community view of what is possible.
 - Describe in plain terms how new school will be different using powerful messengers (e.g., students, parents, principal, teachers).
 - Student exchange with students in high-performing school also powerful—“It will blow their minds to see a high-performing school.”
- **Be cautious about holding national models up as an example**
 - In several cities, national models have been met with skepticism (e.g., in New Orleans, parents concerned about outsiders running schools; in Denver, parents frequently say “you can’t replicate that leader, those teachers, or those kids. How do we know it will work here?”).
 - Best if national models work hard to build local support, even before decision is made.



6. Justify hopefulness, communicate **reality**

- **If possible, use third parties to help explain consequences of current school failure**
 - Organizations that have community trust can play powerful role in explaining current state of the schools (e.g., survey community about current understanding of school failures, use this knowledge to inform community about how far schools are falling short).
- **Education leaders need to be straightforward about past and current failure**
 - Show community members how current situation won't fulfill their dreams for the children (e.g., finish high school, attend college, have a well-paying job) but explain that new efforts may.

“Sometimes people think thoughtful, data-rich presentations and social injustices are enough to get folks involved, but you have to tell a story.”

**—Marshall Tuck,
Partnership for Los Angeles Schools**



6. Justify hopefulness, communicate **reality**

“We do bring in academics and school reformers to work with our folks, but we insist they work with them—not just ‘speechify’ to them. We make sure parents get what they need.”
—Chicago community organizer

- **Make data real to people**
 - Use interactive games, scenarios, skill building exercises—avoid dry data presentations (e.g., use high school “researchers” to explain data in an interactive way).
- **Provide data when requested**
 - In some cases, education leaders waited to provide data until community members requested it, such as when they were considering options (e.g., Denver has committees work through scenarios and these committee members frequently request additional data, Philadelphia provided additional information to selection committees on request as well).



DEFINE STAKEHOLDER ROLES



7. Define stakeholder roles

*“You empower community members when you bring them into the process. **You can over-empower them** and they feel like they’re running things. You must be clear about their role up front; otherwise, people will feel like you’ve wasted their time.”*

**—Yana Smith,
Denver Public Schools**

- **Clarify the roles that committee members and the community at large will play**
 - Range of possible roles includes: 1) being kept informed of decisions; 2) developing criteria for later decision making; 3) making recommendations; 4) having a vote; 5) making the decision.
 - Clarify at the beginning of the process—and then repeat often—the precise roles stakeholders will play in any decision.
- **Prepare stakeholders to fill their roles effectively**
 - Knowledge and skill base can be a barrier to full involvement for some stakeholders. Preparing them to be a part of the process is vital to authentic engagement.
 - Train committee members to serve as ambassadors of their communities (e.g., stress that decisions should not rest on committee member’s personal opinions; they should be shaped by numerous people they have engaged around the issue).



7. Define stakeholder roles

“At the announcement of the board’s decisions, it was a love fest. Families and council members were clapping and crying tears of happiness, district staff got a standing ovation, it was definitely a success!”

—Tim Field, formerly of the School District of Philadelphia

- **Manage expectations**
 - If stakeholders are making recommendations only, manage expectations accordingly.
- **Pre-vet options**
 - Providing decision-making power to the community can improve engagement in the process.
 - Pre-vet a manageable number of options to provide choices to the community while ensuring options are viable in the eyes of education leaders as well.
 - Confirm that providers have the capacity to operate the potential number of schools if all committees choose the same option. Develop a contingency plan if providers do not have that capacity.



MEASURE SUCCESS



8. Measure success

- **Measure success in the following areas:**

- **Demand.** The strength of community demand for dramatic change is the single most important measure. A process that makes everyone feel heard but leaves the naysayers in the majority is not successful.
- **Knowledge.** Measure the increase in community knowledge about what's possible and the current reality of community schools.
- **Trust.** Assess community members' perceptions of the engagement process. Do they believe education leaders and their partners listened to their concerns and will act in the best interests of their children? Were they treated with respect?

- **Measuring the success of engagement efforts allows your team to:**

- Identify if engagement is producing desired results,
- End or modify unsuccessful approaches,
- Ramp up what is working, and
- Demonstrate quick wins to skeptics.



8. Measure success

- **Few do this well**
 - Interviewees admitted they did not capture many metrics that allowed them to accurately measure the success of their engagement efforts. They have focused more on the results of the change effort itself (school results, dropout rate reduction, etc.).
- **Those who did measure engagement results conducted formative assessments to shape their future processes**
 - Metrics included level of family engagement in the school, unusual levels of family participation, and attendance, as well as qualitative survey responses.
- **Technology can help capture real-time data**
 - Handheld response devices can gather community opinions about potential actions, identify community priorities, and garner other feedback.



SUSTAIN THE MOMENTUM



9. Sustain the momentum

“It was always a part of our goals for the councils to stay active through the implementation process and hold the district and providers accountable over time.”

—Tim Field, formerly of the School District of Philadelphia

- **After a decision is made, the conversation with the community shouldn't end there**
 - Continue to engage community members to monitor implementation and early results.
 - Engage community members in other school support and improvement efforts.
 - Partner with community organizations to harness newly-engaged stakeholders in other change efforts.
- **Collect and act on internal feedback**
 - Education leaders should give feedback on improving current engagement practices. Act on these ideas to improve future efforts.



9. Sustain the momentum

“We monitor family engagement throughout the year and reward it with an Oscars-type event. There’s a red carpet, people dress up, and we give out awards. It’s an event that folks love, and they are even greater school advocates afterwards.”

—Marshall Tuck,
Partnership for Los Angeles Schools

- **Celebrate your successes**
 - Tout early, meaningful successes in school improvement to show community that real change is possible.
 - Reward families and communities for their involvement and support.
 - Recognize schools, committees and organizations that have contributed to successful engagement and school improvement processes.
- **Continue to engage new participants**
 - Feed a pipeline of engaged stakeholders for future change efforts.



Concluding thoughts

- **Community engagement is not a straightforward process.** It can be messy, complicated, and inefficient—but it can be all these and still be successful.
- **There's a long-term nature to this work, and an urgency to this work.** Recognize that communities that have long endured low-performing schools may respond negatively to a sense of urgency that makes the process feel rushed.
- **Recognize the roles of ego and politics** in the engagement process, and don't let either hijack the effort.
- **Keep the focus on the ultimate goal:** healthy, safe, engaging, responsive schools that provide a high-quality education for all students.



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