

Organized Communities, Stronger Schools



A Preview of Research Findings

SIX-YEAR STUDY ON COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FINDS POSITIVE IMPACT ON STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Since the emergence of education organizing for school reform in the early 1990s, education organizers, researchers, and foundation supporters have debated the impact of organizing on student educational outcomes.

Now, findings of a pioneering six-year research study by the Community Involvement Program of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, reveal that sophisticated organizing at the grassroots level can indeed make major contributions to improving student achievement.

The study, which quantified, measured, and linked the impacts of community organizing to specific performance indicators, found strong and consistent evidence across multiple data sources that effective community organizing is:

1. Contributing to improved student educational outcomes including higher test scores, high school completion, and aspirations to attend college;
2. Building school-community relationships, parent involvement and engagement, and trust in schools; and
3. Stimulating greater equity in educational policy and resource distribution at the system level.

The study examined seven urban-based organizations that engage in community organizing for school reform. The groups are: Austin Interfaith (Austin, TX); Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (Bronx, NY); Chicago ACORN (Chicago, IL); Community Coalition (Los Angeles, CA); People Acting for Community Together (Miami, FL); Oakland Community Organizations (Oakland, CA); and the Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project and Youth

United for Change (Philadelphia, PA). The rigorous, mixed methods research approach assessed the processes and impacts of organizing efforts over time and included interviews, observational data, surveys, and analysis of school demographic and outcome data.

Organized Communities, Stronger Schools is available at www.annenberginstitute.org. The full study, to be published by Harvard Education Press, will be released in Fall 2009, and will provide an in-depth analysis of the impacts of community organizing and the strategies required to produce these impacts. The Institute will release case studies on participating sites in Spring 2009.

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University is a national policy-research and reform-support organization that promotes quality education for children in urban communities. The Institute conducts research on the impacts of community organizing, and provides training support, organizing strategy, data analysis, and policy research to support urban communities in their struggle for school improvement.

The Mott Foundation, established in 1926 in Flint, MI, by an automotive pioneer, is a private philanthropy committed to supporting projects that promote a just, equitable, and sustainable society. Grantmaking is focused in four programs: Civil Society, Environment, Flint Area, and Pathways Out of Poverty. The Foundation, with year-end assets of approximately \$2.7 billion, made 527 grants totaling \$108.7 million in 2007. For more information, visit www.Mott.org.

Additional readings on our research

Negotiating Reform: Young People's Leadership in the Educational Arena

Seema Shah and Kavitha Mediratta. *New Directions in Youth Development*, edited by Sarah Deschenes, Milbrey McLaughlin and Anne Newman. (Vol. 2008, Issue 117, pp.43 -59).

Outside In: Communities in Action for Education Reform

Kavitha Mediratta, *Theory Into Practice*, edited by Beverly Cross (Vol. 46, No. 3, pp. 194-204).

Leveraging Reform: Youth Power in a Smart Education System

Kavitha Mediratta, Amy Cohen, and Seema Shah. *City Schools: How Districts and Communities Can Create Smart Education Systems*, edited by Robert Rothman.

Constituents of Change: Community Organizations and Public Education Reform

Kavitha Mediratta with Norm Fruchter, Edwina Branch, Barbara Gross, Janice Hirota, Yolanda McBride, Natalie Price, Beth Rosenthal, Tom Saunders, and Meryle Weinstein
New York University, 2004.