

WEBINAR SERIES
Achieving Excellence and Innovation in
Family, School, and Community Engagement

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Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP)



**Harvard Family
Research Project**

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Today's Moderator



Lindsay Torrico
Manager, Public Policy
United Way Worldwide

Achieving Excellence and Innovation in
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"Reforming our schools to deliver a world-class education is a shared responsibility—the task cannot be shouldered by our nation's teachers and principals alone..."

We must recognize the importance of communities and families in supporting their children's education, because a parent is a child's first teacher. We must support families, communities, and schools working in partnership to deliver services and supports that address the full range of student needs."

President Barack Obama, *A Blueprint for Reform* (p. 1)

Achieving Excellence and Innovation in
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New research shows that real family and community engagement is an essential ingredient for effective school reform:

- Leadership as the driver for change
- **Parent-school-community ties**
- Professional capacity
- Student-centered learning climate
- Instructional guidance

Bryk, A.S., Sebring, P.B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J.Q. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Webinar 5: Building Strategic Partnerships to Foster Community Engagement in Education

Presenters:

- **Moderator: Lindsay Torrico**, *Manager, Public Policy, United Way Worldwide*
- **Reverend Brenda Girton-Mitchell**, *Director, Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, U.S. Department of Education*
- **Jane Quinn**, *Director, National Center for Community Schools, The Children's Aid Society*
- **Irasema Salcido**, *Founder, Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools for Public Policy, Promise Neighborhood Grantee*
- **Helen Westmoreland**, *Director of Program Quality, Flamboyant Foundation*
- **Michelle Mittler Crombie**, *Vice President of Community Development, United Way of Lake County, Illinois*

February 9, 2011

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Opening Remarks



Reverend Brenda Girton-Mitchell

Director

*Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships
U.S. Department of Education*

Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships

- Engage community-based organizations, both secular and faith-based, in building a culture of high expectations and support for education
- Strengthen partnerships between community-based organizations and schools that expand academic programming, enrichment activities, and other student supports to help turn around the nation's chronically low-performing schools

Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships

- Develop and support initiatives within the federal government to help maximize the education contributions of community-based organizations, including faith and interfaith organizations
- Work as part of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships to help implement its mission in cooperation with Centers for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships at ten other federal agencies

Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships

“That responsibility begins not in our classrooms, but in our homes and communities. It’s the family first that instills the love of learning in a child.”

**President Barack Obama,
State of the Union 2011: Winning the Future**

Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships

- Discussions and site visits in over 30 cities and towns across the country with a broad range of community-based organizations and other stakeholders
- Great examples of CBO-school partnerships that are expanding learning time for students and also family engagement activities ranging from Baltimore, MD to Racine, WI

Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships

- Heard many challenges, including:
 - Pervasive disconnect between CBOs and schools
 - Funding from ED not flowing to CBOs
 - Greater need for family engagement activities

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Community Schools: Partnerships in Action



The Children's Aid Society



National Center

for

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Jane Quinn

Director

National Center for Community Schools

The Children's Aid Society

Community Schools=A Strategy, Not a Program

A strategy for organizing the resources of the community around student success...

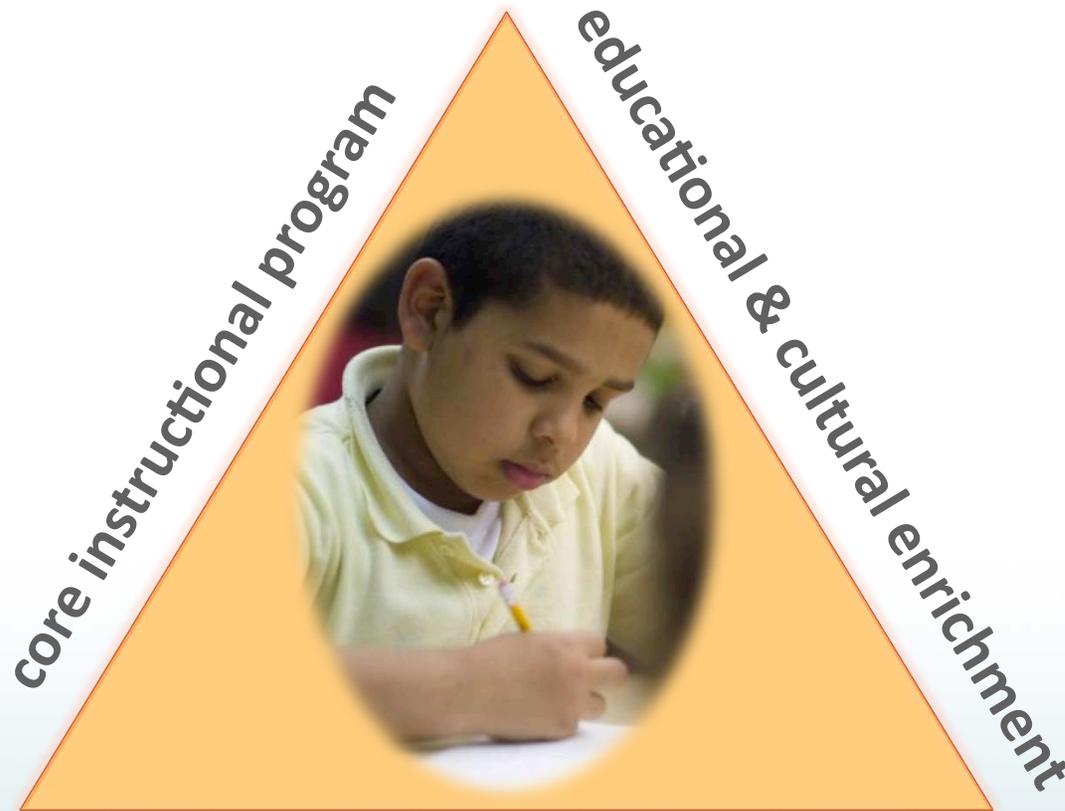
Pat Harvey, Former Superintendent, St. Paul (MN) Public Schools

What Is a Community School?

A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, services, supports, and opportunities leads to improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities.

Coalition for Community Schools

Children's Aid Society (CAS) Developmental Triangle



services that remove barriers to learning

- ◆ physical health
- ◆ mental health
- ◆ dental health
- ◆ social services

Another Definition...

A community school is characterized by

- Extended services
- Extended hours
- Extended relationships (“swinging door”)

Key Ingredients

- Education first
- Lead agency as partner, not tenant
- Full-time presence of lead agency
- Joint planning (particularly between principal and CS director)
- Integration of community partners into governance and decision-making bodies (e.g., School Leadership Team)

Key Program Components

- Afterschool and summer enrichment
- Parent involvement
- Adult education
- Medical, dental, mental health and social services
- Early childhood
- Community and economic development

Results of Community Schools

- Improved academic performance
- Higher attendance rates
- Improved school safety and climate
- Greater parent involvement
- Improved student-teacher relationships
- Teachers able to focus on education

Principles of Effective Partnerships

- ***Be strategic:*** Get the partners you need, not the ones who are most readily available (needs assessment drives partner selection).
- ***Plan together from the start:*** There is no substitute for joint planning (initial and ongoing).
- ***Clarify your vision and mission:*** Make sure all the partners have the same goals in mind.

Principles of Effective Partnerships

- ***Start small and build gradually:*** Address the most urgent unmet needs first and take time to build trust among partners.
- ***Bring parents in early:*** Think of parents as assets, partners, and key informants (not as clients for services).
- ***Share decision making:*** Strong school leaders have an inclusive leadership style (Bryk et al.).

Principles of Effective Partnerships

- ***Prepare team members to work together:*** Collaboration requires skills and, perhaps, “unflexed” muscles.
- ***Stay flexible:*** Even the best-laid plans cannot account for every eventuality; be open to changing your practice.
- ***Keep developing your team’s capacity:*** Annual planning and team-building retreats can build new skills and reinforce trust.

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National Center

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COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Consultation ♦ Advocacy ♦ Innovation



The Children's Aid Society

www.nationalcenterforcommunityschools.org

twitter.com/natcenterforcs

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DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative (DCPNI)



Irasema Salcido

Founder, Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools for Public Policy, Promise Neighborhood Grantee

Helen Westmoreland

Director of Program Quality, Flamboyant Foundation

Background

- Took 2 years of intensive planning, community/resident engagement, and partnership building before applying for federal Promise Neighborhood grant
- Targeted to a “core footprint” of the Parkside-Kenilworth neighborhood of Ward 7 in the District

Parkside-Kenilworth

- 7,000 people in 2 square miles
- Isolated community—no libraries, clinics, grocery stores, industries in neighborhood
- 72% of families are headed by a single female
- 20% unemployment for adults
- Partner schools have 80% students qualifying for FRM
- Three of four partner schools are low-performing

DCPNI Mission

Our **mission** is to increase the number of children who successfully complete their education—from cradle to college—and enter adulthood as productive participants in the 21st century economy and in the civic life of their communities.

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DCPNI Vision

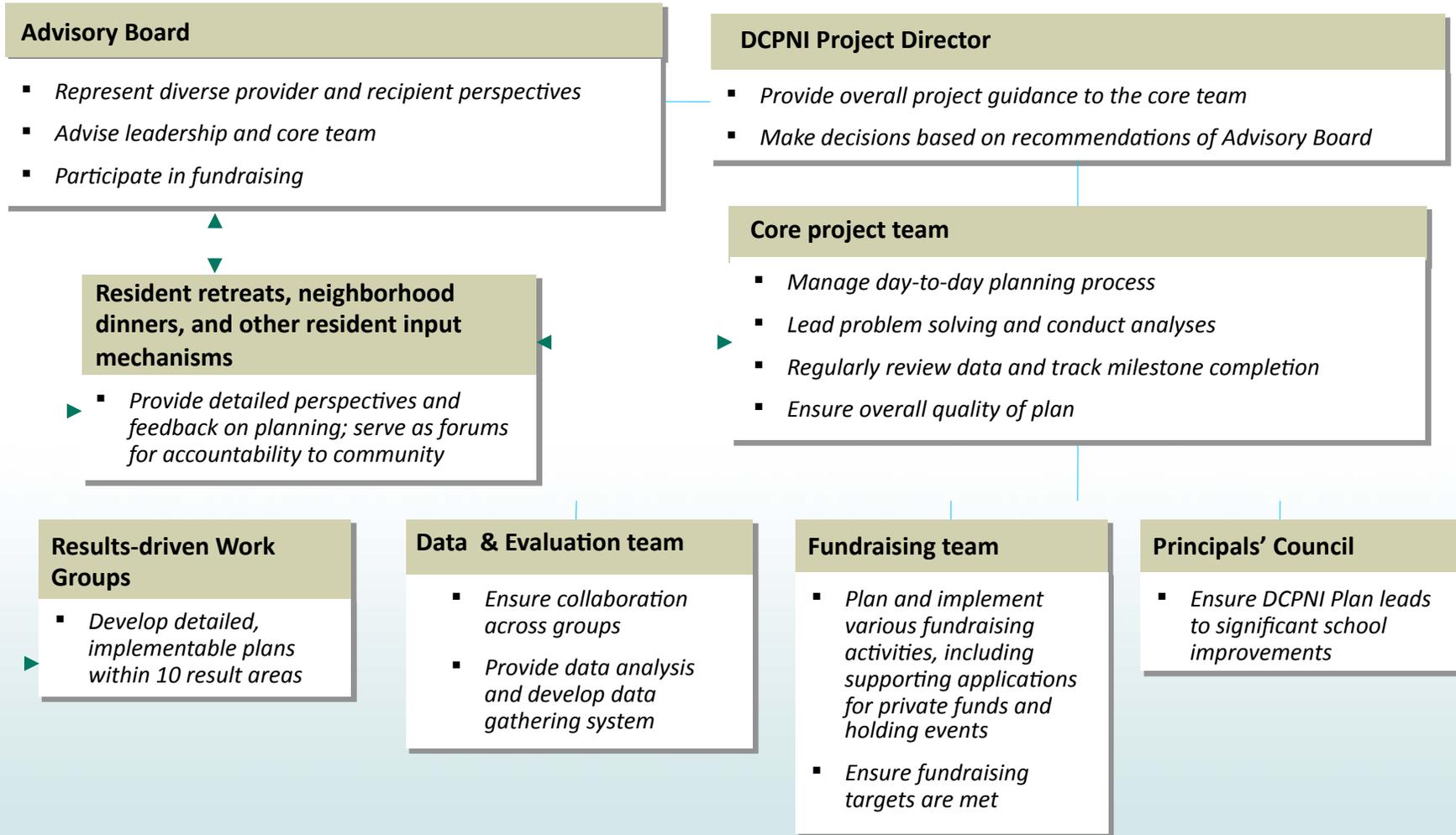
Our **vision** is that each child in Parkside-Kenilworth will receive the Five Promises:

- Caring adults
- Physical and emotional safety wherever they are
- A healthy start
- An effective education
- Opportunities to help others

Partner Profiles

- Two public and two public charter schools
- Stakeholders providing support, technical assistance, and connection to
 - Students
 - Families
 - Schools
 - Community
 - Systems/infrastructure

DCPNI Planning Structure



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Family and Community Support for Learning (FCSL) in DCPNI



The DCPNI Family & Community Engagement

- *Relationships matter* and require investing in a shared vision, an emphasis on results and data, and face-to-face outreach and organizing.
- *Core commitments* from residents, principals and school system leaders, and other influential stakeholders is crucial.
- A *structure* that emphasizes communication and mutuality can bring all partners to one table.

Who the FCSL Planning Team Is...

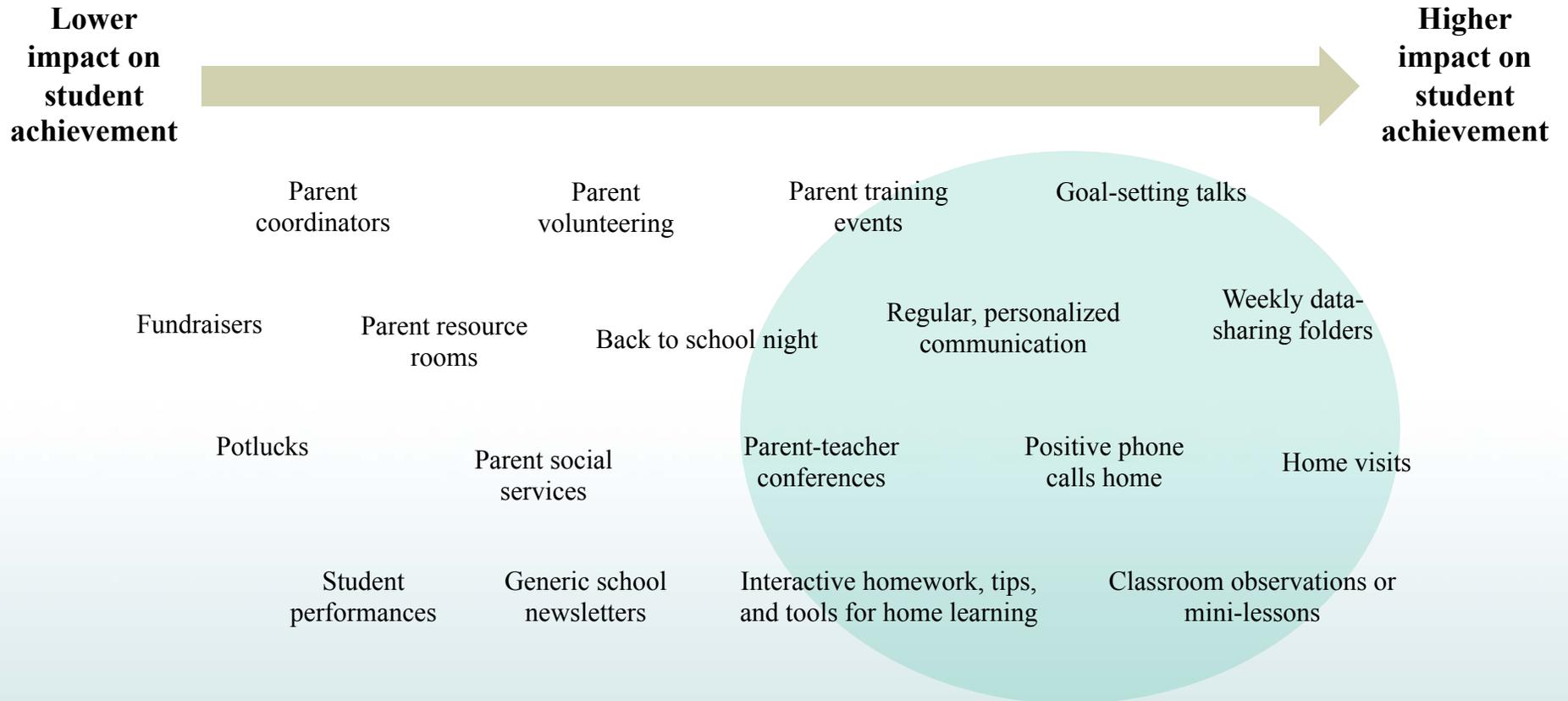
Membership

- 1/3 residents
- Mix of families, CBOs, and school staff
- Representative of each partner school
- Leveraging national expertise in DC

Leadership team

- Resident co-chair
- Local expert co-chair
- Data and evaluation member
- Facilitator

Applying Research to Practice





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Context for FCSL in DC

- The district's education landscape is highly polarized across many dimensions.
- Residents are tired of education programs coming and going and question sustainability.
- Many families and community feel “shut out” of their child's education and the school system.
- Stakeholders lack information and capacity to use family engagement to drive student achievement.

Guiding Principles for FCSL Planning

- Ensure FCSL achieves something
- Engage families and community in collaborative problem solving (not just needs assessment)
- Make the planning process transparent and use people's time well

Guiding Principles for FCSL Planning

- Build in opportunities to look at research and promising practices
- Create opportunities to assess FCSL in partner schools—build on strengths and address gaps

Five Questions for FCSL Planning

1. What does FCSL look like when it is successful?
2. What barriers are standing in the way of this success?
3. What strategies must we consider to overcome these barriers?
4. What programs and activities address these strategies?
5. What are our recommendations for implementation?

Current Reflections...

- How do we ensure that FCSL penetrates beyond the coalition of the willing?
- How do we engage school staff and leaders in critical reflection and planning around FCSL?
- How do we meaningfully measure FCSL as it relates to DCPNI's vision of success for this work?
- How do we ensure sustainability in DCPNI's planning and programming?

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Community Partnerships that Foster Family Engagement



Michelle Mittler Crombie

*Vice President of Community Development
United Way of Lake County, Illinois*

Graduate Prepared to Succeed



↑
Increased Family Engagement

↑
School and Community Support

The Barriers

- Poor communication of requirements
- Parents never receive student reports
- Regular attendance not seen as important
- 50% of families without computers for homework or new reporting system
- Lack of knowledge of what help is available

Why Is It Important to Develop Community Partnerships?

In Planning...

- Understand the strengths, barriers, and realities of the people served
- Know of neighborhood efforts to help
- Able to bring consumers to the table

Why are Community Partnerships Important?

In Programming...

- Expand the reach by offering alternative sites
- Reinforce the program's key concepts
- Get the word out

How to Select Community Partnerships

- Identify the group you want to reach
- Understand their circles of influence

Parents

- Congregations
- Neighborhood stores
- Other parents

Students

- School clubs
- Friends
- Families

What's In It for Them?

- Knowledge that they are part of the solution
- Increased community respect
- Positive publicity

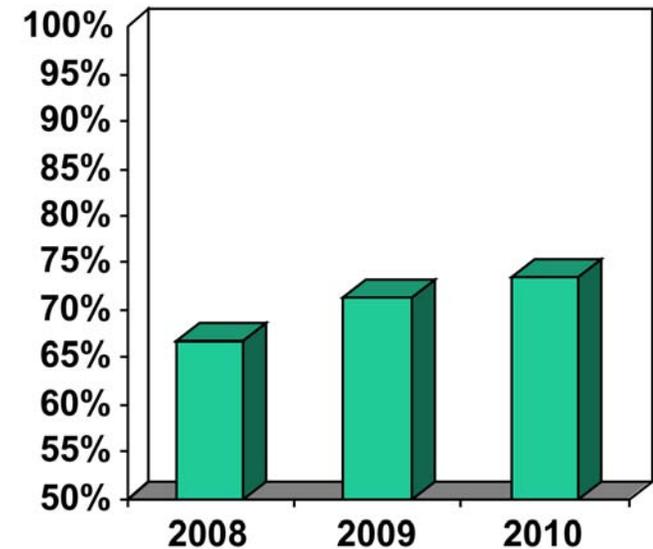
Beyond the Committee...

- Tailor involvement to the individual or group
- Don't hold meetings unless there is something for people to decide or act on
- Be creative when developing ways to help

Ongoing Communications with Community Partners

- Long reports are seldom read
- People love stories
- Pictures tell 1,000 words
(charts too)
- Video clips are even better!

■ On time graduation rates



Major Contributions of the Community Partners

- Faith Council
 - Provided sites and recruited parents for focus groups
 - Recruited tutors from congregations for mentoring programs
 - Opened community computer labs
 - Promoted parent/teacher conferences

Major Contributions of the Community Partners

- JROTC provided childcare for events
- Women's corporate IT professional group taught computer classes to parents
- Emerging Leaders group and LDS missionaries volunteered at orientations, and parent/teacher conferences
- And more...



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Questions and Answers