Superintendents building trust and engagement in five public school districts

April 29 – May 1, 2019

Bangkok
What is public participation?

“Any process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making and uses public input to make decisions.”

-IAP2
Meet Laura

✓ Professional
✓ Active voter
✓ Taxpayer
✓ Two elementary-aged kids
✓ Loves her neighborhood schools

…had **NO relationship** with her school district!
Laura’s perspective…

Scary
Powerful VS Laura
People!
Not likely!
National trends not good

- Parents not joining PTAs (Putnam, 2000)
- Citizens disengaging from schools (Harwood, 2005)
- Growing complexity of institutions (Fisher, 2009)
- Admin relying on expert status (Mathews, 2006)
- Institution distrust of “non-experts” (Sexton, 2004)
- Public easily manipulated (Fishkin, 2008)
Study #1: Hypothesis

Would a parent training that provides

- Institutional knowledge, P2 training *(know-how)*
- Relationships building opportunities *(know-who)*

Raise the community’s P2 capacity?
Training program

✓ Citizen training in **know-how** and **know-who**
✓ Meets monthly for 2½ hours (Sept - April)
✓ Presentations given by institutional leaders
✓ Lots of time for questions & discussion
✓ Include outside subject matter experts
“Know-how”

**District**
- Organizational structure
- Governance
- Budget
- Schools & curriculum
- Student services
- P2/deliberation skills

**State/Local**
- Role of elected officials
- School finance
- State Board of Education
- State & federal laws
- State education policy
- Legislative issues
“Know-who”

District
- Superintendent
- Board members
- Leadership team
  (asst. superintendents, exec. directors, etc.)

State/Local
- Legislators
- State ed. board
- State dept. leads
- City council members
- Law enforcement
Participation

- Study #1
  - Surveys N = 42
  - Interviews N = 27

- Study #2
  - Surveys N = 59
  - Interviews N = 21
  - Superintendent interviews N = 5
Study domains

- Knowledge
- Relationships
- Willingness
- Efficacy
- Action
RQ1: Knowledge
The training significantly improved **my knowledge** of …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policies and practices</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational structure</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State’s role in funding</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional programs</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School board’s role</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*strongly agree/agree*
Comments about knowledge

“When you feel informed, you feel empowered…”

“The district can do the best job in the world but can still be at the mercy of what the state gives us.”

“It was an eye-opener for me to understand that’s why we have to do these 5 things for this 1 child…”
RQ2: Relationships

The training made me more likely to contact …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A friend or acquaintance</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends contact me</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A board member</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The superintendent</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A state legislator</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*strongly agree/agree*
Comments about relationships

“It was the first time I was exposed to legislators.”

“Oh, I think it helps tremendously on the level of trust.”

“…they felt we were important enough to listen and to tell us information.”
Supt. interview findings

Emerging themes
- Trust building
- Advocate building
- Power sharing
- Community building
Trust building

Program benefits
- Raise trust through information sharing
- Face-to-face access to administrators
- Proactive consultation *(before problems arise!)*
Advocate building

Superintendents report participants began

- Quelling rumors and myths
- Forming advocacy groups
- Engaging legislators
Community building

Superintendents

- Meetings initiated new sense of community
- Engaging non-parent participants
- Shifting agendas to real-time concerns
Superintendent quotes

About informed decision-making

“You’re trying to give people high quality, real time information, then you’re involving them in decisions and they’re informed and so they can now really make informed decisions.”

- Superintendent
About proactive engagement

“It’s a bad way to do business when the only time you’re interacting with the public is when there’s a crisis...”
Results

Percent of Participants that Responded Strongly Agree or Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>LSV</th>
<th>Explore</th>
<th>Insiders</th>
<th>Engage</th>
<th>PALs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy</td>
<td>88.1%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 x 5 MANOVA was not significant: $F(16) = .74, p = .43$
The Ripple Effect

- Supportive letters to the editor
- Supportive web & social media comments
- Constituents engaging legislators
- Active constituent organizing
- Super advocates for $ support campaigns
Laura is back!
Sharing knowledge

Building relationships
...and creating informed, connected and engaged stakeholders
Q&A:
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