

# ENGAGED Parents SUCCESSFUL Students

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An Overview of Local and National Parent Engagement in Education Efforts

A report prepared by the Office of the Education Ombudsman for  
the Community Center for Education Results

September 2012

# The Road Map Project

**The Road Map Project** is a civic initiative aimed at driving major improvements in education results in the low-income communities of South Seattle and South King County. Its goal is to double the number of students in South King County and South Seattle who are on track to graduate from college or earn a career credential by 2020. The Project is committed to closing the unacceptable achievement gaps for low-income students and children of color, and increasing achievement for all students. Their focus is on the high-need communities in South Seattle and South King County which have the lowest incomes, lowest student achievement and largest achievement gaps in the region.

**The Community Center for Education Results (CCER)** was founded in Seattle in 2010 to work in partnership with communities and organizations that want to dramatically improve results at all stages of the education continuum, from “cradle through college and career.” The goal of CCER is to make the Puget Sound the region that produces the best-educated people in the world. CCER staffs the Road Map Project.

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## The Office of the Education Ombudsman

**The Office of the Education Ombudsman (OEO)** is a state agency that promotes equity in education and supports the ability of all students to fully participate and benefit from public education in the State of Washington.

OEO works with school districts, parents and students across the state resolving complaints, disputes and problems that affect all areas of student learning. The agency is also charged with promoting family engagement in education and identifying strategies that contribute to the closing of the achievement gap. OEO collects data to identify trends and patterns in public education that become the basis for annual recommendations to state legislators. Since its inception, OEO has worked with hundreds of families whose children attend public schools in the Road Map region and has identified gaps in school-family engagement efforts that contribute to low student achievement in South King County.

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# I. Executive summary

This report responds to a request made by The Community Center for Education Results (CCER) for a scan of the current parent engagement landscape in South King County/South Seattle and sample national models in order to inform the work of the Road Map Project. This report provides an overview of national research and engagement activities currently implemented inside and outside the Road Map region.

With over 110,000 K-12 students, the Road Map region (South King County and South Seattle) is home to 70% of King County's low-income students and 58% of King County's students of color. In the last two decades, the region has experienced an unprecedented wave of immigration from all over the world which has resulted in 69% of King County's English language learners attending schools in the area.

Data shows that there are significant gaps in the achievement of Road Map region students and the opportunities available to them, which result in high rates of school dropouts and low rates of postsecondary educational attainment.

The role that parent engagement efforts play in the improvement of student achievement in the Road Map region is a timely and relevant matter for the CCER to explore. The connection between parent engagement and student academic achievement has been the subject of numerous studies in the last five decades and researchers have confirmed a strong link between the engagement of parents in the education of their children and increased school readiness, higher reading and math scores, and higher graduation rates<sup>1</sup>. A 15-year longitudinal study conducted in 400 struggling Chicago schools found that schools with strong family and community ties, regardless of any other factors, were four times more likely to improve in reading, and 10 times more likely to improve in math<sup>2</sup>.

For a broader view of the conditions necessary for effective parent and community engagement we consulted with national parent engagement experts. They shed light on various related topics:

- There has been a recent shift in research terminology from “*parent involvement*” to “*parent engagement*” to denote the active rather than the passive parent role that parents play in education and a sense of shared responsibility with schools.
- To become engaged, parents need to develop a sense of efficacy and empowerment. Parent empowerment is a condition for effective parent engagement and is the result of adult learning.
- For successful engagement to take place there must be simultaneous capacity building of both parents and educators. Both groups need to learn how to partner with each other.
- Educators do not receive professional training on matters of parent and community engagement.
- It is the schools' responsibility to extend a hand to families and initiate the process of engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> Xitao, Fan and Michael Chen. “Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis.” *Educational Psychology Review* 13.1 (2001): 1–22. Print.

<sup>2</sup> Bryk, Anthony, et al. *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010. Print.

- It is important for school districts to set up an infra-structure for effective parent and community engagement. This includes dedicated central office and school building staff, budget allocations, policies, procedures, and district-wide plans that include annual goals.
- Education researchers recognize the important role that the community plays in student achievement. They have identified families, schools and communities as overlapping spheres of influence that, when working in unison, contribute to the optimal academic learning and social-emotional wellbeing of students.

As part of our research and by request of the CCER, we scanned parent organizing groups working in various parts of the nation. These groups, an offshoot of community organizing groups, are recognized by researchers as a type of parent engagement model.

Parent organizing groups are successful at training and mobilizing parents to influence change in public schools. They help parents shift their focus from individual problems to collective concerns and provide extensive training, coaching, mentoring, and leadership opportunities that empower them to tackle issues such as: unfair treatment to students, inadequate education funding, low quality instruction, overcrowded school buildings and more.

What makes these groups unique is their focus on building relationships among parents and utilizing the social capital that results from those efforts, to accomplish common goals. Social capital, which is defined as the sum total of the strengths, talents, knowledge and connections of a group of individuals that is harnessed for the good of the whole, is a necessary condition for the transformation that organizing groups want to see happen in schools.

### **Local engagement efforts**

Through the lens of family and community engagement in education, we scanned the engagement structures and activities currently implemented by the seven school districts located within the Road Map region: Auburn, Federal Way, Highline, Kent, Renton, Seattle (South Seattle schools) and Tukwila. It is important to note that this scan did not include a study of the impact of school district engagement activities on student achievement.

The Road Map school districts are in various stages of organizational development for parent and community engagement. Most have invested in various levels of staffing and a centralized department for engagement. All have developed avenues to communicate and engage parents whether they have a central office department leading the way or whether the task is left to individual school buildings

All districts utilize technology to communicate with and engage parents but districts that do not have central office engagement staff rely more on tools such as electronic newsletters, auto-calling systems, text messaging, mobile kiosks, Wi-Fi hotspots, online portals, etc.

All of the Road Map districts have found ways to establish partnerships with community organizations that provide services and supports for parents. In several districts, the superintendent, school principals, and other administrators develop these partnerships.

From our interviews with school district engagement managers, we gathered the following information:

- Several engagement managers report a need for continued professional development regarding parent and community engagement for themselves and for district and school staff.
- Most expressed the need for increased funding to scale up their engagement activities.
- Most said they currently work in silos with no avenues to connect with their peers across the region.

We scanned 18 community-based organizations operating in the Road Map region. The majority of these organizations have ties to Road Map schools and school districts. We found that many understand their important role in education as partners of public schools and are willing to play a greater role in parent engagement in the Road Map region.

They offer a wide range of services for families and have connections and relationships with schools, school districts, diverse community groups, churches and other organizations.

Their services can be grouped into three broad areas: parent capacity building, assimilation/cultural brokerage, and family social/emotional/health/learning support. Several organizations that specifically serve immigrant and refugee populations feature the unique component of *cultural brokerage*, which means that their staff and their volunteers help schools and the rest of the community understand the culture of their respective parents and they help their parents understand American schools and culture.

Interviews with some staff members revealed their own desire to learn more about K-12 public education in order to better serve their constituents. Other information we gathered includes:

- Their concern that schools and districts may not be fully aware of the services and programs they offer and therefore are not connecting families with them.
- Their wish for increased funding in order to expand their service capacity.
- All of them also reported that, as organizations, they work in silos and do not have opportunities to share knowledge and information with their peers.

### **Parent focus groups**

To gather parent input, we conducted five focus groups with a small sampling of diverse immigrant, refugee and American-born parents whose children attend schools in the Road Map region. Parents discussed their own school experiences, their perspectives on parent engagement in education, the engagement obstacles they encounter, their relationships with schools, and their hopes and dreams for their children. All participants wanted the best education for their children and believed in the importance of parental engagement, but many said they do not know how to get involved.

Most participants expressed their need to learn more about how the public education system works so they can better advocate for their children. Immigrant parents said they learn how the American school system works only after their children experience problems in schools. They depend on community-

based organizations, faith-based institutions and other parents to get the information they need about the school system.

Some parents said they do not feel like they belong in schools. They expressed the need for an “access point” in every school building. This could be a Parent Engagement Coordinator or a Parent Center designated to work with them and make them feel welcome.

### **Engagement efforts outside the Road Map region**

We reviewed the activities of a sampling of school districts outside the Road Map region that were recommended by national experts: Baltimore City Public Schools in Maryland, San Diego Unified School District in California, Minneapolis Public Schools in Minnesota, and the Vancouver and Pasco school districts in the State of Washington.

These districts offer an impressive menu of engagement activities and the majority of them have made substantial investments in infra-structures for engagement. With respect to parent capacity-building, these districts have developed a variety of parent training activities. The most notable models are the Parent Universities implemented both in Boston Public Schools and the San Diego Unified School District. These programs, which have gained national recognition, are very similar to each other in that they exist within the organizational structures their school districts have developed, depend on a wide network of community partners to assist with parent recruitment and programming and on business sponsorships and private funding for sustainability.

### **Recommendations**

The work of the Road Map project in the parent engagement area has just begun and it can only lead to increased regional capacity for parent and community engagement. Based on the information gleaned from scans, we have developed the following recommendation for the CCER:

1. Identify promising local activities and programs that could be scaled up in the Road Map region. Research their impact on student achievement and provide support for their successful implementation.
2. Research the viability of a Parent University-type model in the region. Among the sample activities presented in this report, the Parent University models from Boston Public Schools and the San Diego Unified School District merit further research and consideration for replication in the Road Map region. These programs build the capacity of parents to better engage with schools and include components that researchers recommend.
3. Build networks to share information. Both Road Map community-based organization staff and school district engagement staff find themselves working in silos. They have expressed the need for avenues to share knowledge and information with their peers. The Road Map Project is uniquely positioned to act as the conduit for coordinated cross-communication efforts in the region.

## II. Introduction

This report responds to a request made by the Community Center for Education Results (CCER) for an overview of relevant research and existing parent engagement efforts in school districts and community-based organizations operating within the Road Map region (South King County and South Seattle), and a sampling of engagement activities outside the region.

The information presented in this report was gathered during 14 weeks in the summer of 2012 and although we interviewed nationally recognized parent engagement researchers and reviewed relevant studies, it should not be construed as an exhaustive study or a research project; it is instead a snapshot of engagement efforts which should be read in the context of a constantly shifting local and national landscape.

We gathered information using a qualitative analysis methodology. Participants (national experts, school district engagement managers, parents, and community-based organization staff) filled out questionnaires provided by CCER, and were then personally interviewed. Questionnaires can be found on Appendix B of this report.

Five community-based organizations volunteered to host parent focus groups and parents participated based on their availability. School district demographic data was obtained from the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction as well as from school districts.

In this report we use the terms *parent* and *family* interchangeably to denote all adults that care for children and play a role in their education. Similarly, the terms *community organizations* and *community-based organizations* are used to describe any outside group that interacts with both parents and schools alike.

### III. What researchers say

The connection between parent engagement and student academic achievement has been the subject of numerous studies in the last five decades and researchers have confirmed a strong link between the engagement of parents in the education of their children and increased school readiness, higher reading and math scores, and higher graduation rates<sup>3</sup>.

To further expand our knowledge, we interviewed three renowned national experts in the field:

- Dr. Karen Mapp, Harvard University, College of Education lecturer, researcher and author/co-author of numerous publications including *Beyond the Bake Sale* and the recent book: *A Match on Dry Grass*.
- Dr. Joyce Epstein, research scientist, professor of sociology, director of the Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University and author and co-author of numerous studies and publications.
- Dr. Ann Ishimaru, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Washington, author and co-author of numerous studies and publications, and contributor to the book *A Match on Dry Grass*.

#### Definitions

After decades of using the term *parent involvement*, researchers have shifted to the term *parent engagement* to denote active partnerships between families and educators. *Parent empowerment* is another term currently applied to the capacity of parents to engage in education. These terms are however more related to mindsets than semantics. While many of us want to see a linear progression from involvement to engagement to empowerment, the reality is that these stages overlap.

#### Key findings

After decades of using the term *parent involvement*, researchers have shifted to the term *parent engagement* to denote active partnership and shared responsibility between parents and educators.

It is important to increase both parents and educators' capacity to engage with each other.

Parent empowerment is a necessary condition for engagement.

Parents may make the decision to not engage with schools because they do not feel a sense of efficacy.

Parent empowerment is related to adult learning. It increases parents' sense of efficacy.

Educators do not receive professional training on parent and community engagement.

School district infrastructure is important for effective engagement activities.

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<sup>3</sup> Xitao, Fan and Michael Chen. "Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis." *Educational Psychology Review* 13.1 (2001): 1–22. Print.

*Parent involvement* usually means that families are solely responsible for their involvement and have a particular job and a set of responsibilities. This definition however, is one-sided and passive in nature. It avoids the issue of the imbalance of power between families and educators. *Engagement* is a more active term, connoting that everyone is in this together and that education is a shared responsibility. Equally, the term *school, family, and community partnership*, preferred by many practitioners and researchers, denotes that parents, schools, and the community have the same vision and goals.

### **How do parents become engaged?**

Dr. Mapp states that empowerment is a necessary condition for parents to engage in the education system and adult learning is the basis for empowerment. She suggests that full engagement is a shared responsibility and one of the ways that parents can achieve that is by becoming empowered. “Many of our parents, unfortunately, are at the margins. They don’t feel a sense of power and do not acknowledge their own voice,” she says.

An important element of parent engagement is the parent sense of efficacy, which means believing that they can contribute to their children’s education. According to a seminal study published in 2005 by Vanderbilt University researchers Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey and Howard Sandler, some parents make *the intentional choice* not to engage with schools because they feel they do not have much to contribute and do not understand the role they can play in their children’s education.<sup>4</sup>

Across the nation, parent organizing groups are working to increase parent efficacy and increase their capacity to influence change in public schools. “The parent organizing model is steeped in adult learning principles and strategies, and is a recognized type of engagement and empowerment,” says Dr. Ishimaru. To better accomplish their goals, parent organizers work first to build relationships among parents and community members and then provide them with training and leadership opportunities that increase their ability to accomplish common goals. We review parent organizing models on page 11 of this report.

Building parents’ sense of efficacy through community initiatives makes sense, says Dr. Epstein but it is not a substitute for the responsibility of school districts to reach out to parents. She believes that many school districts choose to focus only on external means of parent outreach rather than developing their own internal capacity for engagement. Getting organized for engagement is particularly important, she adds, for school districts that serve a high number of struggling students whose parents need to become active participants in education.

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<sup>4</sup> Hoover-Dempsey, Kathleen, et al. “Why Do Parents Become Involved? Research Findings and Implications.” *The Elementary School Journal* 106.2 (2005): 105-130. Print.

## Simultaneous capacity building

The experts agree that training parents to better navigate and understand the public education system is a common-sense approach to effective engagement. However, given that engagement is a reciprocal action, they are dismayed to report that in the last 30 years not much progress has been made in the area of training educators to engage parents. “If you only build the capacity of families and you do not, at the same time, offer professional development for educators, you will end up with disequilibrium,” says Dr. Mapp. In addition, training both parents and educators not only increases their capacity to work together as partners, rather than adversaries, but it ensures accountability from both groups.

School districts sometimes confuse parent engagement with federal compliance (such as the Title I parent involvement requirements) says Dr. Epstein. But the reality is that parent engagement is not about compliance, it has to do with school districts’ values, priorities and focus on student achievement.

## Whose responsibility is it?

Experts agree that it is the schools’ responsibility to extend a hand to families and initiate the process of engagement. The process begins when districts work to integrate family involvement strategies into academic plans, and organize staff, resources and activities focused on reaching out to all families.

## School Improvement

Parent and community engagement are also an important part of school improvement efforts. In 2011, renowned education researcher Anthony Bryk published the results of a 15-year longitudinal study conducted in 400 Chicago schools titled *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago*<sup>5</sup>.

### The Epstein Framework

Joyce Epstein a researcher at Johns Hopkins University developed a framework to assist school districts and schools in structuring themselves to engage families. This framework is now used in thousands of schools and school districts in the nation. The framework is formed by 6 types of involvement:

**TYPE 1 – Parenting** - Assist families with child-rearing skills. Assist staff to learn more about families.

**TYPE 2 – Communicating** - Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through an effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication system.

**TYPE 3 – Volunteering** - Improve recruitment, training, and management of families as volunteers to support student learning.

**TYPE 4 – Learning from home** - Involve families with their children in learning activities at home.

**TYPE 5 – Decision making** - Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy in schools.

**TYPE 6 – Collaborating with the community** - Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with community-based organizations, businesses, institutions, etc.

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<sup>5</sup> Bryk, Anthony, et al. *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons From Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010. Print.

The study found five essential ingredients necessary for transforming struggling public schools into successful schools: strong leadership, continued professional development, instructional support, a positive, child-centered school climate, and strong family and community ties.

All five factors were equally important, but the schools with strong family and community ties, regardless of any other factors, were four times more likely to improve in reading, and 10 times more likely to improve in math.

## **Parent organizing groups**

Parent organizing groups are an offshoot of community organizing groups which historically have worked for social causes such as health care, housing, job development, civil rights and more. In recent years, as a result of growing parental dissatisfaction with their local schools and pervasive achievement gaps, organizing groups have added K-12 education issues to their agendas and focused their work on organizing parents to influence change in the education system.

The groups tackle issues such as constructing new school buildings, charter schools, parent inclusion in school decision-making, unfair treatment to students, inadequate education funding, low quality instruction, overcrowded school buildings, and more. In many cases they have been able to achieve substantial outcomes and their accomplishments have led national researchers to recognize their work as a parent engagement model.

By request of the CCER, we reviewed seven parent organizing groups working in various parts of the nation:

- **Center for Parent Leadership** – Louisville, Kentucky  
A non-profit, parent leadership training organization serving the state of Kentucky.
- **Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)** – Los Angeles, California  
A Latino advocacy non-profit organization, a branch of the national Legal Defense and Education fund. They are the creators of the *Parent School Partnership* training program.
- **Together Colorado** – Denver, Colorado  
A statewide community organizing group focused on K-12 education.
- **People Acting in Community Together (PACT)** – San Jose, California  
A faith-based, community organizing group that convenes and trains parents.
- **Logan Square Neighborhood Association** – Chicago, Illinois  
A community organizing group serving a Chicago neighborhood that trains parents and places parent tutors in schools.
- **Salem Keizer Coalition for Equality** – Salem, Oregon

A coalition of like-minded community organizing groups focused on social justice and equality for youth and families in the Salem-Keizer school district.

- **Boston Parent Organizing Network** - Boston, Massachusetts  
A community organizing group across Boston Public Schools that trains and advocates for parents

**Characteristics and attributes of parent organizing groups reviewed**

For the purpose of this report we scanned the unique characteristics and attributes that make these groups different from other organizations. The characteristics they all share are the following:

- They do long-range work for transformational change (changing the culture of the system) and short-term for transactional change (accomplishing a specific goal, like the passing of a law or increasing the budget for low income schools).
- They are led by charismatic leaders.
- Their group members are intentionally diverse in various aspects: age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religious beliefs and education levels – all working together for common goals.
- They help group members shift their focus from individual problems to collective concerns.
- They build the capacity of group members by providing training, coaching and mentorship.
- They build organizational capacity by building strong interpersonal relationships among group members and cultivating trust and respect among organizers and group members.
- Group members are offered opportunities to practice leadership skills.
- Group members are taught how to gather social capital and political constituency to influence change and accomplish a goal.

The following table summarizes the attributes and successes of reviewed organizing groups with respect to parent engagement activities and other education issues.

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Attributes</b>
<p><b>Center for Parent Leadership/ Pritchard Committee</b> Lexington, Kentucky</p>	<p>CPL has been in existence for over two decades with a “laser focus” on parent leadership training. Thousands of Kentucky parents and family members have participated in their Parent Leadership Institutes and over 2,000 have participated outside Kentucky in 10 states. Parent graduates go on to become leaders in their school communities and their state.</p>
<p><b>MALDEF Parent School Partnership program</b> Los Angeles, California</p>	<p>The Parent School Partnership program increases participants’ social capital by providing field experiences so they become more familiar and comfortable interacting with the school system and learn about the college application process. All programs are offered in Spanish.</p>

<p><b>Together Colorado</b> Denver, Colorado</p>	<p>Success is the result of having “sophisticated politics” whereby leaders can quickly adapt to rapidly changing situations. For example, leaders mobilize members to picket an issue they disagree with in the evening and are present the next morning at the negotiating table working on the same issue.</p>
<p><b>PACT San Jose</b> San Jose, California</p>	<p>The PACT organizing group spearheaded a long term campaign that led to the creation of many new charter schools and district-sponsored <i>new small autonomous schools</i> – high-performing schools which have closed the achievement gap and are getting Latino children onto a college track in numbers never before seen in San Jose. This success deepened their credibility, helped forward their agenda, and positioned them as community leaders.</p>
<p><b>Logan Square Neighborhood Association</b> Chicago, Illinois</p>	<p>LSNA is deeply committed to the concept of <i>restorative justice</i>, which involves elements of accountability, responsibility, and competency development. Parents, who had historically been perceived as a threat, are now partners in school decision-making. Key to these partnerships was the more welcoming climate in schools as well as the tools and skills that parents learned.</p>
<p><b>Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality</b> Salem, Oregon</p>	<p>SKC has successfully leveraged the combination of education advocacy with historic social justice issues. They have created various training programs for Hispanic parents to understand the school system, and learn their rights as well as their obligation to collaborate in order to solve issues in education. SKC’s parent training programs validate the shared experience of parents as well as their personal knowledge and skills.</p>
<p><b>Boston Parent Organizing Network</b> Boston, Massachusetts</p>	<p>BPON members are called (and seen as) <i>leaders</i>, and given the respect they deserve. Also, the incorporation of youth organizing has provided a needed infusion and gives youth a chance to develop their capacities. Another aspect in their success is the ability to collaborate with other organizations.</p>

**Relational power and social capital**

The organizing leaders interviewed say that organizing starts with relationships. They work to build *relational power* which means connecting people to each other for the purposes of taking public action. If unilateral power involves power over someone or something, relational power emphasizes power with others. *Unilateral power* is seen as inequitable, but relational power represents a win-win situation. Given the importance of relationships to educational change, this kind of power is particularly critical when working in the education arena.

For many of the organizing groups reviewed, the catalyst of educational transformation is the *social capital* that results from relationship-building efforts. Social capital is the sum total of the strengths, talents, knowledge and connections of a group of individuals that is harnessed for the good of the

whole. It is a necessary condition for the transformation that organizing groups want to see happen in schools.

Due to their close ties, leaders and group members feel a connection with each other and comfortable sharing common goals, successes and struggles. Those relational bonds, when focused, are a powerful agent of change and all the groups have been able to leverage this concept to achieve success.

Strong ties among members also expand the base of resources and power available to organizing groups and help mobilize individuals to action. This was evident in the case of a parent from the Logan Square neighborhood who had strong feelings of isolation. It was only when she was introduced to other parents with similar feelings that she found a sense of community and was inspired to work hard and become a leader.

Moreover, community organizing groups see themselves as not just engaged in school reform solely for the purpose of improving public education, they see themselves as working to improve public education as part of a larger process of developing leaders and empowering communities to address the full range of social injustice and structural imbalances that create marginalization.

### **Charismatic organization leaders**

Much has already been written about the value of leaders to an organization and this scan reinforced that idea. While there is a diversity of leadership styles, as well as different organizing models and approaches that exist in our exploration, the classic “leader leading us into battle” possesses the right set of personality traits – *extroverted, a dynamic speaker, a formidable presence, charismatic, kind, respectful, visionary, etc.* – that guide an organization towards success.

All leaders we interviewed possessed the internal desire to empower their constituents in ways that give them dignity and a sense of efficacy. These leaders focused on removing barriers that prohibited others from reaching their full capacity and knew that their efforts depended on everyone’s involvement and that their successes were derived from the “ground up” as opposed to initiatives “from the top down.”

These organizational leaders viewed themselves as functional and not positional. They talked about the “true leaders” of the organization being the parents and community members.

### **Focus on social justice**

Allowing for people to see their efforts as linked to a “bigger and greater struggle” lies at the heart of community organizing. All of the groups we reviewed teach about historic oppression in the context of education.

The efforts of the Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality as well as PACT in San Jose exemplified this focus. As parents began to be trained in advocacy, connected their involvement and role in education with historic efforts of social justice struggles, they began to work harder to accomplish their goals. It is not a

coincidence PACT San Jose leaders say that their organizing region draws from the same region where notable activists like Caesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta fought their struggles against injustice.

### **Parent capacity building**

The groups reviewed are located in cities with large, diverse school districts. Many parents and families that are served by these districts' programs are typically working class, sometimes from historically marginalized groups such as immigrants and limited English speakers.

Every organization has been successful at training parents to engage with schools and accomplish particular goals. Their parent trainings not only include information about schools, e.g., how they operate, how they are governed, funded, etc. but also leadership development and life skills.

The Center for Parent Leadership's (CPL) program with the Pritchard Committee in Lexington is one of the best examples of effective capacity building and longevity. The CPL, which has been in existence for over 20 years, focuses exclusively on training parent leaders from all school districts in the state of Kentucky.

Twice a year they offer six days of intensive training where, as a culminating project, parent leaders must develop a plan of action tied directly to their school's academic improvement plan. As a result, plans are well thought through and not single-shot activities that cannot be sustained over time. One outcome of CPL through the years has been that parent graduates have moved into areas of influence such as school boards, PTA leadership and the state legislature.

### **Recognizing and capitalizing on opportunities**

The groups we reviewed have expertise at being watchful for opportunities to mobilize group members and strategically place them where they can affect change. For example, The Logan Square Neighborhood Association benefitted from a policy shift at the school district that allowed for parents and families to become part of local building leadership teams. While the new policy opened the door for parents to influence change in the school district, there was still a need for parents to be trained, so LSNA provided the appropriate classes and coaching, equipping parents for their new roles.

## IV. School District-based parent engagement

A 2011 study written by researchers Steve Sheldon, Joyce Epstein and Claudia Galindo from Johns Hopkins University titled *Levels of Leadership: Effects of District and School Leaders on the Quality of School Programs on Family and Community Involvement*, delineates the elements of effective, high-quality school district family engagement efforts. After studying data collected from hundreds of school districts in the nation, the researchers concluded that district leadership, trained district and school administrators, attention to equity issues, and the collection of evaluative engagement data were persistent and significant variables for quality engagement efforts.

The experts we interviewed also underscore the importance of school districts setting up a structure for parent and community engagement in order to better organize their practices. District organization involves setting up relevant policies, procedures, selecting institutional values, setting up a district engagement department, allocating appropriate funds, hiring a district-level engagement manager or coordinator, hiring school-building staff, and developing district-wide plans that include annual goals.

Although many school districts in the country have mission statements and policies touting the importance of parent and community engagement, experts suggest that unless districts have a designated central office engagement manager or coordinator, policies may not get implemented. “Having a district department sends a clear message that parent and community involvement are official district priorities and a critical element of student learning,” says Dr. Mapp.

District-level engagement managers or coordinators usually function as coaches, facilitators, coordinators and experts that can develop district-wide plans and assist school staff in implementing district policy. They collect and share successful practices from and among school buildings in the district, and ensure that engagement goals are met at all levels. Many also provide training on parent and community engagement for district staff, parents and community partners.

Additional elements of an optimal engagement structure include school building-based family engagement coordinators or liaisons and the development of engagement or partnership teams made up of administrators, teachers, parents and community members. School building-based parent engagement staff also sends a message about the importance of family and community involvement in the school and provides a single, consistent point of contact for parents and community members.

### School districts in the Road Map region

Seven K-12 school districts with an enrollment totaling over 110,000 students are located inside the Road Map region in South King County.

- Auburn School District
- Federal Way School District
- Highline School District
- Kent School District

- Renton School District
- Seattle School District (Southend only)
- Tukwila School District (The Tukwila School District was named the most diverse school district in the nation in a study conducted by the New York Times in 2011).

This chart provides the districts' enrollment and demographic data in the 2010 – 2011 school year.<sup>6</sup>

	<b>Auburn</b>	<b>Federal Way</b>	<b>Highline</b>	<b>Kent</b>	<b>Renton</b>	<b>South Seattle</b>	<b>Tukwila</b>
Number of Schools <sup>7</sup>	23	45	36	42	25	36	5
Number of Students	14,648	22,178	17,973	26,992	14,429	19,617	2,930
White	55%	38%	27%	44%	33%	18%	19%
Black	8%	12%	11%	12%	20%	33%	19%
Asian/Pacific Islander	11%	17%	19%	19%	25%	29%	28%
Hispanic	20%	23%	34%	17%	19%	15%	27%
Native American	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Free and Reduced Meals	52%	50%	66%	50%	54%	67%	75%
Special Education	12%	12%	14%	13%	14%	13%	9%
Transitional/Bilingual/ELL	12%	12%	21%	17%	15%	22%	36%

### **Engagement structures**

We explored the engagement structures currently in place in the seven school districts that are part of the Road Map region. We examined whether districts have in place a central office department, a manager or coordinator, designated budget and additional engagement staff.

Our review showed that five out of the seven Road Map school districts have a central office engagement department or at least one person in the role of engagement coordinator. All school districts have adopted parent engagement policies and all but two have dedicated budgets for parent engagement.

<sup>6</sup> Data from OSPI Washington State Report Card, 2011 Demographic Information by School

<sup>7</sup> Schools with zero (0) enrollment not included

There is a wide variation in staffing numbers -- from part of one FTE position in one district to 23 FTEs in another. Budget allocations come from a variety of sources such as the district's general education fund, state and federal programs funds such as Title I and Title III and, as in the case of Seattle Public Schools, funds from the state Readiness to Learn grant and the City of Seattle Families in Education Levy.

The table below compares the districts' current structure for engagement.

	<b>Family engagement policy</b>	<b>Family engagement department</b>	<b>Staffing (FTEs)</b>	<b>Dedicated budget allocation</b>
<b>Auburn</b>	Yes	No	N/A	N/A
<b>Federal Way</b>	Yes	Yes	4 FTEs	Yes
<b>Highline</b>	Yes	Yes	23 FTEs (also working on equity issues)	Yes
<b>Kent</b>	No	Yes	1 FTE	Yes
<b>Renton</b>	No	No	N/A	N/A
<b>Seattle</b>	Yes	Yes	5 FTE, 4 P/T, and 32 hourly	Yes
<b>Tukwila</b>	Yes	Yes	.06 FTE (with other responsibilities)	Some

### **Engagement activities**

In general, all of the Road Map school districts have developed avenues to communicate and engage parents whether they have a central office department leading the way or whether the task is left to individual school buildings.

All districts utilize technology to communicate with parents but the districts that do not have central office engagement staff rely more on tools such as electronic newsletters, auto-calling systems, text messaging, mobile kiosks, Wi-Fi hotspots, and online portals. While they routinely post information for parents on their websites, not all of them have pages or sections specifically devoted to parents or families.

All of the Road Map districts have found ways to establish partnerships with relevant community organizations that provide services and supports for parents. In several districts, the superintendent, school principals, and other administrators develop these partnerships.

We interviewed engagement department managers who spoke about their own need for continuous professional development and technical assistance and the need for all school district staff to receive training to better understand the cultural diversity of their population and how to engage all families in education. One district manager noted that if this kind of training was made a requirement and a

priority for all district staff, everyone's work with families would be a lot easier and engagement effectiveness would increase.

When asked what they needed to ramp up their work, some of them expressed their need for increased funding to accomplish goals such as placing a parent engagement coordinator in every school building in their district.

District engagement managers also notably reported that they work in silos and they do not have many opportunities to share information and learn from their peers. Currently no avenues exist to connect engagement staff working in Road Map school districts with each other.

Below is a list of parent engagement strategies Road Map school districts are currently implementing. It is important to note that Road Map school buildings also implement activities and strategies to engage parents however reviewing those practices was not within the scope of this scan.

#### **Auburn School District**

- Communication to parents via electronic tools such as School Messenger.
- Parent survey every two years.
- School Board-initiated parent committees, trainings and events for parents, students and community members.
- Programs for ELL parent involvement, including English language classes and community family forums.
- *Accelerating Young Minds* – A pre-K program in partnership with Kent School District and local preschool providers. It connects pre-K parents and early learning providers to technology to help prepare students for Kindergarten.

#### **Federal Way School District**

- District-level Parent Leadership Team
- Parent Leadership Institute
- Family Liaisons in 6 schools
- Quarterly Key Communicators (parents and community partners) meetings
- *What every parent wants to know* – workshops for parents
- *What every teacher wants to know about engaging families* - workshops for teachers
- *Partnership 101* – Advocacy process workshops for parents facilitated by engagement staff and parents

#### **Highline School District**

- *Family Engagement for Student Learning: A Toolkit for School Leaders* – an overview of district policy, Family Engagement research and best practices for educators. Currently working on developing toolkits for families and CBOs
- School building-based workshops for parents
- Spanish-speaking paraprofessionals placed in schools to engage parents

#### **Kent School District**

- Phone calls to parents in different languages
- Home and community visits by school staff and volunteers
- *The Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE)* to be implemented in the future.

- *KSD Kiosk Project* - provides parents with technology access through mobile kiosks and Wi Fi hotspot so they can review a student's educational progress, attendance, assignments and access other online resources
- *Accelerating Young Minds* – A pre-K program in partnership with Auburn School District and local preschool providers. It connects pre-K parents and early learning providers to technology to help prepare students for Kindergarten
- *Building Better Futures*- A program that offers school readiness workshops for parents of preschoolers in collaboration with King County Housing Authority and Kent Youth & Family Services,
- *Navigating Your School* - Parent workshops in multiple languages offered at community centers and at public housing sites.

#### **Renton School District**

- Annual community stakeholders meetings
- School Messenger, an electronic communication tool used to communicate with parents in their primary language
- Parent surveys
- Parent engagement is an important emphasis in the 2012-13 strategic plan

#### **Seattle School District**

- Family Advisory Council to the Superintendent
- Family Symposia three times a year
- Family Engagement Action Teams in 41 schools
- Paid parent leaders in several schools
- Workshops for parents
- Electronic newsletter
- Text messaging to parents
- Parent electronic portal – The Source

#### **Tukwila School District**

- Translated written annual surveys for parents at parent events.
- Support for school building-based engagement events
- Family events for individual ethnic communities such as: East African, Bhutanese, Nepali and Burmese Family Nights.

### **A sampling of school districts outside the Road Map region**

We scanned the structures and strategies of a few school districts outside the Road Map region that were recommended to us by national experts. These districts offer a wide range of engagement activities and the majority of them have set up substantial structures for engagement. It is important to note that our scan did not include research regarding the effects of school district organization on student academic achievement and we recommend further inquiry in that area.

We reviewed five school districts outside South King County that have demographic characteristics similar to the Road Map school districts:

- Pasco School District, Washington
- Vancouver School District, Washington
- San Diego Unified School District, California
- Baltimore City Public Schools, Maryland
- Minneapolis Public Schools, Minnesota

The following chart provides their 2010-2011 enrollment and demographic data.

	<b>Pasco Washington</b>	<b>Vancouver Washington</b>	<b>San Diego Unified California</b>	<b>Baltimore City Maryland</b>	<b>Minneapolis Minnesota</b>
Number of Schools	19	41	222	194	90
Number of Students	14,973	22,192	131,784	84,212	33,574
White	25%	67%	24%	12%	33%
Black	2%	4%	11%	86%	36%
Asian / Pacific Islander	1%	5%	15%	1%	8%
Hispanic	70%	17%	46%	4%	19%
Native American	0.3%	1%	0.4%	0.4%	5%
Free and Reduced Meals	72%	52%	66%	84%	65%
Special Education	13%	13%	13%	17%	18%
Transitional/ Bilingual/ELL	35%	9%	29%	3%	21%

### **Engagement structures**

Our review showed that all of these school districts have developed and organized substantial structures for engagement that include a central office department, dedicated central office and school building staff, significant budget allocations, and strong ties with community-based organizations to enhance their engagement work.

Baltimore, Minneapolis and San Diego school districts have set up engagement departments that are led by executive directors and/or managers who oversee a number of staff as well as other offices such as a communications office, an Ombudsman office, or a volunteer services office connected to parent and community engagement. All services pertaining to parents have been placed under the umbrella of their engagement departments.

The Baltimore City School District has school building-based partnership teams and Family Involvement Coordinators in every school building. Full-time Family Engagement Specialists from the district office

provide technical assistance to building partnership teams. The Community Engagement Specialist, who is part of the district office team, develops partnerships with community organizations.

For sustainability, all of the school districts focus on pursuing grants, business sponsorships and partnerships with institutions such as community colleges, cities, parks and recreation departments, state agencies, and community organizations. This allows them to scale up their efforts and expand their base of support.

The table below compares the districts’ structure for engagement.

School District	Family engagement policy in addition to Title I	Family engagement department	Staffing (FTEs)	Dedicated budget allocation	Partnerships with CBOs
Pasco	Yes	Yes	4	Yes	Yes
Vancouver	Yes	Yes	9	Yes	Yes
Minneapolis	Yes	Yes	48	Yes	Yes
San Diego Unified	Yes	Yes	32	Yes	Yes
Baltimore City	Yes	Yes	58	Yes	Yes

### Engagement activities

The engagement departments of these school districts offer an extensive menu of options and services for parents such as parent training classes, information about district policies, school calendars, parent councils, volunteer programs, family support programs, publications, Ombudsman offices, enrollment centers, student transportation information, and more.

A common feature among all of them is that they have set up Parent/Family Centers either at the district’s central office, within school buildings, or in both as in the case of San Diego. The Vancouver School District’s Family-Community Resource Centers (FCRCs), for example, are strategically placed in high-need schools and offer both academic and social service supports for students and their families. FCRCs are staffed by Social Workers and Parent Engagement Coordinators who are also charged with developing partnerships with community-based organizations, businesses, institutions and other members in their own school communities. Through these partnerships they are able to expand their volunteer corps and offer early learning programs. A central office manager of FCRCs oversees staff and centers, and provides technical assistance.

These districts pay particular attention to partnerships with community-based organizations and have developed processes to organize these efforts that are separate from parent engagement efforts. Minneapolis Public Schools, for example, has a Community Education office that is an access point for organizations seeking partnerships with schools. Community liaisons manage partnerships and place appropriate community services in school buildings. Organizations register for partnerships via an online tool. San Diego Unified school district depends on its wide network of community partners to provide parents with a substantial menu of classes as part of their Parent University.

They also utilize technology broadly to better inform and educate parents. They offer parent webinars, online publications, host virtual forums, send electronic newsletters, and some have created translated videos for ELL parents. San Diego, Minneapolis and Baltimore City websites have specific sections for parents/families and offer extensive information in an organized and user-friendly format.

Here is a list of their current activities:

#### **Pasco School District**

- The Pasco school district began implementing the Epstein model in 2006. The model calls for central office designated staff and Action Teams for Partnerships (ATP) in every school building. Action Teams for Partnerships are formed by school staff, parents and community members. They develop and implement annual engagement plans focused on academic plans.
- Central office engagement staff provides technical assistance to principals and ATPs, as well as manage the Parent Center located in a school building turned into a learning center.
- The Parent Center offers a menu of classes for parents. Childcare and transportation assistance are provided.
- Central office engagement staff collects and disseminates successful school building engagement activities via a monthly electronic newsletter.
- Central office staff seeks partnerships with businesses and community organizations to support all school buildings.
- The Parent Center maintains close connections with early learning programs and classes for parents of pre-schoolers.
- The Pasco School District is a member of the National Network of Partnerships Schools.

#### **Vancouver School District**

- The district has 9 Family-Community Resource Centers (FCRCs) strategically placed in high-need schools serving a variety of family academic and social needs, and coordinating parent and community engagement efforts.
- Central office engagement staff provides technical assistance to all schools in the district.
- The Parent Academy is offered during the school year - 1,268 families participated in the 2010-2011 school year.
- Early learning programs - 1,675 children and families participated in early learning programs in the 2010-2011 school year.
- Partnerships with businesses, institutions and community-based organizations contribute with funding, programming and family support.

#### **Minneapolis Public Schools**

- Executive Director of Family and Community Engagement
- Policies and procedures relevant to parents and students

- Bilingual engagement staff at district and school-building levels
- District Parent Advisory Council
- Parent Councils in every school building
- Volunteer Office at the central office
- Ombudsperson Office at the central office
- Family Center at the central office
- Connecting Parents to Educational Opportunities (CPEO) – CPEO is a 7-week curriculum based parent training offered throughout the year. The program includes childcare, dinner and transportation
- Videos and webinars for ELL parents
- Title 1 Parent Advisory Council
- Special Education Advisory Council
- New Family Center – for incoming ELL families, offers enrollment, interpretation, translation services.
- Community liaisons who work with community organizations
- On-line registration for community organization partners
- Parent Portal – electronic tool that gives parents access to academic information
- Partnerships with faith-based organizations
- Calendars and other information for parents on the district’s website

#### **San Diego Unified School District**

- Parent Outreach and Engagement Department
- Parent Center located at central office
- Parent University (See page 26 of this report for more information.)
- Parent News on website
- Indian Education Program
- Parent Academic Liaisons in schools
- Southeast Asian/Pacific Islander Family Program
- Parent Outreach Calendar
- Student testing information
- Translation and interpretation services for parents and school staff
- Family/Parent Centers in school buildings
- Publications for parents
- Videos and webinars for parents
- Parent Academic Liaisons (PALS). PALS are site-funded resource teachers responsible for coordinating family engagement at their school buildings and developing academic support programs for parents. With the support and the work of PALS, school buildings offer: Family Fridays, Wonderful Wednesdays, Dads Club, At Home with Reading, At Home with Words (vocabulary development), At Home with Writing, Family Language Arts, Family Math, Healthy Homework Habits, Active Parenting and Literacy Survival Kit for Parents and Teens.

#### **Baltimore City School District**

- Executive Director of Office of Engagement
- Family and Community Engagement Annual Report
- Policies and procedures relevant to parents
- Annual engagement goals
- District Parent and Community Advisory Board

- Ombudsman office
- Family Institutes delivered 112 course offerings in the 2010-2011 school year, serving more than 1,320 parents
- Title I Parent Involvement information
- Calendars and other relevant information posted on the website for parents
- Bullying and harassment information
- Partners For Success program links community-based organizations with schools
- Parent Publications
- Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee
- District climate survey
- Workshops facilitated by community-based organizations throughout the city offered by the Community Support for Schools coalition
- Free and reduced meals program information
- Parent councils in every school building

## **Parent Universities**

Both the San Diego Unified School District Parent University and the Boston Public Schools Parent University came to our attention in the course of our scan. Both are nationally recognized models that exist within the organizational structures their school districts have developed and have been functioning for well over a decade. Both also depend on their wide network of community partners for programming and parent recruitment, business sponsorships and private funds for sustainability.

Note that we wished to explore overall structure and programming of Parent Universities and scanned the Boston model for comparison purposes but we did not review the engagement structure or other engagement activities implemented by Boston Public Schools.

Our scan showed that these programs focus on parents and family members who are part of their enrollment and are very similar to each other. Their training curriculum is designed to help participants to not only understand the public school system and support their children's education from home, but also to develop advocacy, leadership, and parenting skills. Through the use of workshops, intensive multi-day trainings and a certificate program, they aim to help parents and family members understand the important role they play in their children's education and engage with schools.

A menu of parent workshops are offered throughout the calendar year and multi-day training events are offered several times a year. The multi-day events are set up much like an academic or professional conference with participants attending a plenary session and having the option to attend breakout sessions on a broad range of topics such as homework assistance, home budgeting, healthy meals, consumer awareness, FAFSA preparation, college admissions, interviewing skills and even tax preparation. Furthermore, sessions are also offered in multiple languages.

Parent Universities offer certificate programs that prepare parents to become trainers of other parents, school leaders, and education advocates. Certification is based on the number of classes that parents have taken and, in the case of one of the models, graduates are eligible for a small stipend of up to \$500.

While these models go to the core of capacity and efficacy building, the level of execution and professionalism of the classes are equal to the level of many colleges and institutions of higher learning. Classes are taught by professionals in various fields of expertise that volunteer their time and/or by community-based organization staff with diverse cultural, ethnic and professional backgrounds.

They offer a curriculum that does not overlook achievement gaps in the district, but also addresses what needs to be systemically addressed. In addition to the fact that these programs are tuition-free, they offer other features like childcare, interpretation, food, transportation and schedule the sessions multiple times through the year in different school buildings to mitigate parent attendance barriers.

They also focus on recognizing the achievements of parents when they become learners. Graduation ceremonies are taken with as much seriousness and importance as school graduations. Families and friends of the graduates are invited to attend and celebrate afterwards. Parent Universities are treated as a dignified, serious stepping stone for parents. Graduates go on to work on projects and in committees in their schools and at their central offices.

The impact of Parent Universities on student achievement was not a subject of our scan. We recommend further review and research in this area.

## V. What parents say

To gather information about parents' views on their participation in their children's education and engagement with public schools, we conducted five focus groups in various parts of the Road Map region.

We talked to a total of 57 parents whose children attend Federal Way, Highline, Kent, Renton, Seattle and Tukwila schools. The participants' backgrounds included Russian, Ukrainian, Somali, Hispanic, African American and Caucasian. The groups ranged from 10 to 20 participants; all meetings included a meal and some included childcare. Participation was based on parents' availability.

The groups were hosted by the following Road Map community-based organizations:

- *Para los Niños* hosted a Hispanic parent focus group conducted in Spanish.
- *School's Out Washington* hosted a Ukrainian/ Russian parent focus group. Parent participants were fluid in English.
- *Rainier Beach High School PTA* hosted a parent focus group of PTA members.
- *Community Schools Collaboration* hosted a Hispanic parent focus group conducted in Spanish.
- *Culturally Appropriate and Responsive Education Center (CARE)* hosted a Somali parent focus group conducted in English with interpretation available for limited English speaking participants.

Parents discussed their own school experiences, their perspectives on parent engagement in education, the obstacles they encounter, their relationship to schools, and their hopes and dreams for their children. Here is a summary of what they told us.

### **Their own school experiences**

How adults view education and schools is based, in general, on their personal experiences growing up. This was confirmed by the perspectives offered by the parents who participated in our focus groups. Whether they attended schools in or outside the United States, all had the common belief that their own school experience was influenced by teachers and parents' high expectations of them.

### **Key Findings**

All participants expressed their belief in the importance of parental engagement, but many said they do not know how to get involved.

Most participants expressed their need to learn more about how the public education system works.

Immigrant parents said they depend on community-based organizations, faith-based institutions and other parents to get information about schools.

All participants correlated parent engagement with student achievement but some were not sure that schools see it that way.

As opposed to immigrant parents, American-born parents said they believe that they have a right to advocate for their children.

Many participants said they have noticed that schools' outreach and engagement efforts are not uniform across school buildings.

Some parents feel treated like second-class citizens in schools.

Many participants expressed the need for an "access point" in every school. This could be a Parent Center or a Parent Engagement Coordinator.

Somali, Mexican, Russian and Ukrainian parents shared the common experience of attending schools where teachers were seen as the experts and parents completely deferred to them. In their recollection, their teachers were more authoritarian than American teachers, discipline was strict (including corporal punishment) and class sizes were larger.

Teachers presented information in a formal, direct way and expected students to memorize lessons. They had absolute control of students at school and also in the community. Students were expected to respect them and obey them at all times.

Academic expectations for students were very high – they were supposed to be proficient at reading and writing in first grade and good penmanship was very important. Students attended school six days a week. Two schools sometimes were housed in one school building – elementary students attended in the morning and secondary attended school in the afternoon.

Immigrant and refugee parents said there are substantial differences between American public schools and schools in other countries. For example, schools abroad do not serve food; students have to bring their own lunches and eat in their classrooms, as schools buildings do not have lunchrooms. They do not have libraries, gyms or playgrounds. They do not have nurses, school psychologists or counselors. School time is focused on classroom teaching and learning. Grading systems are different from ours and parents have to come to school to sign off report cards several times a year. Students take a final exam to be promoted to the next grade level and if they do not pass the exam, they repeat the grade. They can repeat the grade as many times as needed in order to pass the final exam.

While schools in Ukraine, Russia, Somalia and Mexico have fewer resources than ours --such as low technology, outdated buildings and scarce learning materials, immigrant and refugee parents felt that, as children, they had thrived in school environments where learning was a very serious matter.

They reported that they are at times puzzled by the way American schools operate. They were not sure that schools here take learning seriously and believe that their children are not learning as much here as they themselves did growing up. They have come to the realization that in the U.S., educators are not necessarily the experts or *the authority*, and that parents can advocate, challenge, and question school decisions that impact their children, despite feeling uncomfortable to do so. For American-born parents, this sense of advocacy is more intuitive. They expressed a firm belief that it was their right as parents to advocate for their children and it was the right of their students to receive a good education.

### **Views of family engagement**

All parents expressed their belief in the importance of parental engagement, but many say they do not know exactly how to get involved.

All parents correlated their involvement with student achievement, but they are not sure that educators see it that way. They expressed the need for “an access point” at the school so they can feel like they

belong and are welcome in the school. This can be a person (Parent Coordinator or Liaison) or a center specifically to work with parents and make them feel more welcomed. When asked, none of the parents participating in the focus groups knew that there are family involvement departments in many of their school districts.

All parent participants reported confusion about the lack of uniformity in schools' outreach and engagement methods. They have noticed that every school building seems to have their own outreach approach and some school buildings have no approach at all. They also noted that some schools seem to be more welcoming to them than others.

### **Navigating the public education system and other barriers**

The majority of parents said that they have learned about the public school system "the hard way," mainly after some problem that has happened with their children. In the case of immigrant and refugee parents, it is their children who usually help them learn about the education system. These parents also depend on other parents, community organizations, and faith-based institutions to get information about the education system.

Because they may not fully understand how the public education system works, many parents said they could not be as proactive as they would like to be in order to prevent major problems from happening to their children -- such as truancy, disciplinary actions or low academic performance. They are usually contacted by the school by either a phone call or letter only after something bad has happened. Some parents commented that schools do not communicate positive things about their children.

Somali parents wanted schools to know that they are an oral society and do not communicate in writing so they need to be communicated with via a phone call or a home visit so they can get information they need. Furthermore, their children also experienced culture shock, as some had never seen white individuals until they arrived to United States; many of them had not attended school before.

### **Relationships with schools**

Some parents of color expressed concerns about how schools treat them. In many cases, they felt like outsiders or second-class citizens when they went to their children's school. Some parents felt school staff judged them by the way they dress, the way they talk, and by the color of their skin.

All parent participants felt that educators have failed to educate and orient them about how things work in public schools. Occasionally, a teacher might explain the system to them and community-based organizations' staff may answer their questions, but it is not enough. Furthermore, many immigrant and refugee parents that we spoke to did not know what terms like *Special Education*, *Bilingual Education*, and *Title I* mean. One parent thought the term *Special Education* meant that her child was *special*, in other words achieving well academically, and had no problems in school.

Immigrant/refugee parents said the majority of information sent to their homes from school is usually in English. They receive English language letters, flyers, the annual PTA membership envelope or auto-calls inviting them to some event that they do not understand. Sometimes someone from the school calls them in their native language, but this is infrequent. American-born parents also said that they not always understand information that comes home from school, even though it is in English but filled with educational lingo.

### **Concerns about their children's education**

Many parents were also concerned about how their children were being educated. They felt that schools have lower expectations of their students and their teachers did not communicate clearly, what their children really need to learn to succeed. Russian and Ukrainian parents especially, felt tired of always “knocking at the teacher’s door” asking for academic progress reports about their students. They did not feel that schools were serious about forming partnerships with parents. One parent summed up these feelings by sharing, “Sometimes you feel like your kids are in the ocean and you don’t know whether they are swimming or sinking.” American-born parents also felt that the schools were not challenging their students enough and when they were told that their children are doing *fine*, they are not sure if it meant they are succeeding academically or barely meeting the standards.

African-American parents wanted higher expectations for their students and Somali and Hispanic parents wanted more homework, although they need help to assist their children with homework completion at home. Parents who work several jobs do not have time to help their children at home.

### **Hopes and dreams**

Immigrant parents wanted to ensure that their children graduate from high school and find a job so they can support themselves. American-born parents expressed their desire to send their children to college, but many acknowledged that paying for the cost would be difficult.

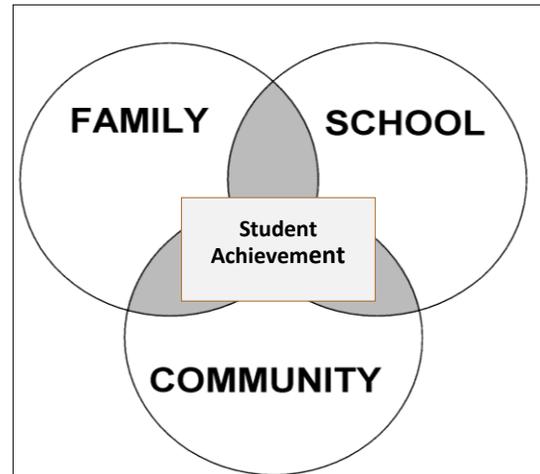
Regardless of background, language or culture, all parents wanted the best for their children. They wanted them to grow up to be “happy adults; find the right career; have a good life; make a difference in other people’s lives; be successful at work; serve others; have the right priorities.”

# VI. Community-based parent engagement

## Community-Based Organizations in South King County and South Seattle

Community-based organizations play an important role in K-12 public education. They offer programs that support student and parent learning and offer other services that contribute to the wellbeing of families.

Education researchers have identified three overlapping spheres of influence that play a role in student achievement: family, community and school.<sup>8</sup> The experiences, philosophy and practices of each sphere contribute to the success of students in school and in life. When these three spheres are working in unison, experts say, students are more likely to achieve.



The Road Map Project provided us with a list of 18 community-based organizations serving parents and students in South King County and South Seattle for review. These organizations have ties to K-12 public education and work to offer education support programs for students and parents or advocate for education-related issues, or both. They are:

- Campaña Quetzal
- El Centro de la Raza
- Coalition for Refugees from Burma
- Community Schools Collaboration
- Community and Parents for Public Schools
- Culturally Appropriate and Responsive Education Center
- Kent Youth and Family Services
- League of Education Voters
- Neighborhood House
- New Futures
- One America
- Open Doors for Multicultural Families
- Para los Niños
- Parents for Students Success
- Renton Area Youth and Family Services
- South East Seattle Education Coalition

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<sup>8</sup> Epstein, Joyce, et al. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2009. Print.

- White Center Community Development Association
- Washington State PTA

We contacted all 18 organizations and for various reasons, including summer vacation schedules, we were only able to interview staff from half of that number. In addition, not all written questionnaires we sent them were returned so we used some information readily available on their websites to complete our scan.

The majority of them have developed capacity building programs and activities for parents. A list of their parent engagement-related programming can be found in Appendix B. A review of the effectiveness of those programs was not within the scope of this project.

From the information we gleaned, the work of the community organizations operating in the Road Map region can be described as intricate and inter-connected. They offer a wide range of services that are sometimes integrated into others, and have connections and relationships with schools, diverse community groups, churches and other organizations.

They are all non-profit organizations funded by private grants, donations and/or membership fees. Their budgets fluctuate as they continuously seek grants, small and large, and receive donations. Some are large and well-established while others are small and new, operating in a temporary location with minimal staff assisted by volunteers. The number of students and families they serve at any given time is dependent on the grants they receive and the projects they may be working on.

The majority of these organizations have established ties with Road Map school districts. Over 50% of them work with one or two school districts; about 35% of them work with 3-4 school districts; and about 15% of them work with all seven school districts in South King County.

### **Supporting education along several dimensions**

Approximately 75% of them devote at least 85% or more of their work to supporting the education of parents and students in various ways. Their activities fall somewhere on a continuum. On one end of the continuum, are those organizations that work in *direct support* of educational efforts by offering for example, tutoring for students or training parents to navigate the school system and/or acquire leadership and advocacy skills. On the other end of the continuum are those that work in *indirect support* of education, where educational issues are integrated within other programs. An example of this is health and social service family support services alongside parent information to understand the school system.

Several organizations that specifically serve immigrant and refugee populations feature the unique component of *cultural brokerage*, which means that their staff and their volunteers help schools and the rest of the community understand the culture of their respective parents and they help their parents understand U.S. schools and culture. They offer English language classes, assist schools with interpretation and translation, and help families get integrated into their new country without abandoning their own culture.

The activities of the community-based organizations scanned can be grouped in three broad areas:

**Assimilation and “cultural brokerage”**

- Immigrant outreach
- Citizenship services
- English learning classes
- Translation/interpretation

**Parent capacity building**

- Policy advocacy training
- Parent training
- Learning to navigate the school system
- Home learning strategies for parents
- Leadership development

**Family social/emotional, health and learning supports**

- Human and social services
- After-school programs
- Tutoring and/or test preparation
- Early learning programs
- Health and mental health services

**A desire to collaborate**

Our interviews with some community-based organization staff revealed that many understand their important role in education as partners of public schools and are willing to play a greater role in parent engagement in the Road Map region.

They would also like to have better connections with Road Map school districts. Some expressed concern that educators often perceive them as “outsiders” in the K-12 education arena and they do not utilize their services and programs as much as they are needed by students and parents. Collaborating with school districts can also be challenging and confusing they said. Some school districts have too many access points and not one designated staff to work with them. In other instances, school districts may not connect families to community-based organizations because they do not know the menu of services and resources that organizations, and in particular ethnic organizations, can offer.

A few staff members interviewed spoke about their own need to learn more about K-12 public education in order to better serve their constituents. When asked what they needed to scale up their services, many of them expressed their need for increased funding. Several interviewees also reported that, as organizations, they work in silos and do not have frequent opportunities to share knowledge and information with their peers.

## VII. Recommendations

This report provides a scan of engagement activities currently implemented in the Road Map region and beyond. Although, the limited scope of this project prevented us from conducting a deeper inquiry of all areas reviewed, we were able to glean a wide range of information from which we base the following recommendations to the Community Center for Education Results (CCER):

1. Our scan revealed a local parent and community engagement landscape worthy of further research and targeted inquiry. While this report provides an overview of district-based and community-based engagement activities it does not include information about their effectiveness. It is advisable that the CCER identifies promising local activities and programs that could be scaled up in the region, researches their impact on student achievement and provides support for their successful implementation. Quality, targeted activities can only lead to better outcomes for parents and students in the Road Map region.
2. A menu of school district-based parent engagement activities implemented outside the Road Map region is presented in this report. Among the sample activities, the Parent University models from Boston Public Schools and the San Diego Unified School District stand out. These programs have earned national recognition because they build the capacity of parents to better engage with schools and include components of community collaboration and school district infra-structural support that researchers recommend. The Parent University model merits further research and consideration by the CCER for replication in the Road Map region. A successful implementation of this model would respond to the needs expressed by the parents participating in our focus groups.
3. Community-based organization staff and school district engagement staff in the Road Map region find themselves working in silos. They have expressed the need for avenues to share knowledge and information with their peers across. Efficiencies can be achieved by building connections between groups doing similar work and the Road Map Project is uniquely positioned to act as the conduit for coordinated cross-communication efforts in the region.

We hope the information presented in this report will open the door to the implementation and coordination of effective parent and community engagement activities that are designed to improve the academic achievement of all students in the Road Map region.

## VIII. Appendix A

A list of Parent engagement programs currently implemented by Road Map region community-based organizations reviewed in this report:

Organization	Description	Parent Engagement Programs
<p><b>Campaña Quetzal</b> Seattle</p>	<p>A non-profit coalition of parents, youth, educators, and organizations committed to supporting the academic and personal potential of each Latino student and eliminating the academic achievement gap.</p>	<p>CQ offers parent training and leadership programs. Their training program called Padres Promotores de la Educación helps Latino families create a pipeline to higher education for their children. Delivered in Spanish, the program is based on a curriculum that helps families understand the education system.</p>
<p><b>El Centro de la Raza</b> Seattle</p>	<p>A non-profit organization that uses social, cultural, educational, economic and civic activities as vehicles to bring peoples of all races together to combine a strong sense of self-worth and connectedness to one's family and culture with active participation in community affairs.</p>	<p>El Centro de la Raza provides case management and workshops to support and educate families about how to navigate and become involved in the school system in order to support the academic goals of their child. Their culturally and linguistically appropriate services increase parents' involvement in parent/teacher meetings and school activities while preparing them to effectively guide their children through school entry, transitions, and graduation.</p>
<p><b>Coalition for Refugees from Burma</b> Seattle</p>	<p>A non-profit mutual assistance association focused on providing culturally and linguistically appropriate support services to improve the living conditions and quality of life of refugees from Burma resettled in Washington State.</p>	<p>CRB offers a wide range of educational workshops for refugees such as Domestic Violence Awareness, Legal 101, College Preparation, Parenting in America, and Family Planning. They provide youth leadership training and multi-media workshops in the summer.</p>
<p><b>Community Schools Collaboration</b> Tukwila/Highline</p>	<p>A public/private partnership that collaborates with the Tukwila and Highline School Districts and other organizations to provide students and their families with an array of opportunities that support their success.</p>	<p>CSC provides homework assistance and tutoring for elementary to high school students and training and support programs for parents.</p>

<p><b>Communities and Parents for Public Schools</b></p> <p>Seattle</p>	<p>A non-profit organization building a grassroots network of parents and community members to advocate for the improvement of Seattle schools. CPPS is the Seattle chapter of the national Parents for Public Schools.</p>	<p>CPPS offers parent leadership development programs and workshops to prepare parents to advocate for the improvement of schools. Their Ambassador Program provides parents with tools to recruit and involve new families with their schools and community.</p>
<p><b>Culturally Appropriate and Responsive Education Center (CARE)</b></p> <p>Renton/Kent</p>	<p>A non-profit organization established in 2009 with the mission to promote and cultivate the social and economical development of African youth and their families living in King County.</p>	<p>CARE provides training, community organizing and advocacy to develop educational, social, cultural appropriate and environmentally sustainable programs for youth and families. They serve as cultural brokers between African families and schools.</p>
<p><b>Kent Youth &amp; Family Services</b></p> <p>Kent</p>	<p>A non-profit organization that provides professional counseling, education and support services to children, youth and their families by developing innovative programs in culturally sensitive ways.</p>	<p>KYFS provides programs ranging from Early Childhood Education and Head Start to transitional housing for teen moms. Their Substance Abuse Prevention and counseling programs for individuals and families are offered in schools.</p>
<p><b>League of Education Voters</b></p> <p>Statewide</p>	<p>A statewide policy advocacy organization working for education reform in public schools.</p>	<p>They work to improve educational outcomes for students in Washington state through improving education practices and increasing funding. They host online and in-person presentations, trainings, seminars and mobilize parents to advocate for public policy.</p>
<p><b>Neighborhood House</b></p> <p>King County</p>	<p>A non-profit organization that works to help diverse communities attain their goals for self-sufficiency, financial independence, health, and education. They focus on alleviating poverty in communities such as public housing complexes in Seattle and King County.</p>	<p>NH works with low income and limited English-speaking parents. They organize family nights and community workshops at local schools. Their Early Childhood Education program provides diverse, culturally-appropriate services to all enrolled families, many of whom are recent refugees and immigrants. They provide home-based services to children between 2 and 3 years old using a research-proven model called the Parent-Child Home Program. This program prepares young children for school success by increasing language and literacy skills, enhancing social-emotional development and strengthening the parent-child relationship.</p>

<p><b>New Futures</b> South King County</p>	<p>A non-profit organization that operates in four low-income apartment complexes in South King County offering a unique blend of educational programs, family support resources and community-building assistance.</p>	<p>New Futures bridges between families and schools in a variety of ways. They provide transportation and interpretation for school functions, help parents enroll their children in school, understand how the school system works and advocate for their children. They serve as cultural brokers between families and schools.</p>
<p><b>One America</b> Statewide</p>	<p>A policy advocacy non-profit organization focused on social justice and issues affecting immigrants.</p>	<p>One America mobilizes individuals to advocate for social and legislative change. They partner with faith-based and other service organizations. They offer training on leadership development and public education opportunities.</p>
<p><b>Open Doors for Multicultural Families</b> Kent</p>	<p>A nonprofit, charitable organization dedicated to ensuring that families who have family members with developmental disabilities and special health care needs have equal access to culturally and linguistically appropriate information, resources and services.</p>	<p>ODMF provides a number of services for families of students with disabilities including family support, home visits, language and cultural assistance, advocacy training, parent mentors, parent Leadership and Involvement development, multicultural family gatherings, Inclusive respite and recreation opportunities; IDEA/IEP/IFSP training, information and referral.</p>
<p><b>Para los Niños</b> Highline</p>	<p>A grassroots non-profit organization founded by immigrant, Spanish-speaking community members of South King County.</p>	<p>Their program Aprendamos Juntos (Let's Learn Together) integrates child and parent learning to boost academic success, build children's emotional development, and support parenting. OSPI standards are incorporated into the school readiness component. It is offered in three elementary schools (in White Center and SeaTac), in partnership with the Highline School District and Highline Community College. Descubriendo Nuestra Cultura (Discovering Our Culture) is a summer institute for low-income children (pre-kindergarten to sixth grade) from Latin American immigrant families. The institute is led by bi-lingual Spanish teachers from the Highline School District.</p>

<p><b>Parents for Students Success</b></p> <p>Seattle</p>	<p>A nonprofit advocacy organization that assists schools and organizations to develop custom parent and community involvement methods for an improved impact on student learning and social well being.</p>	<p>Their Parent to Parent Seminars® offer opportunities for parents to teach other parents how to get their children through the K-12 education system “on time and within budget.” Their Community Workshops include topics that are important to all parents: Positive Home to School Communication, Home Supported Learning, Helping Your Child Become an Independent Reader, It’s Your Team, You are the Coach, etc.</p>
<p><b>Renton Area Youth &amp; Family Services</b></p> <p>Renton/Tukwila</p>	<p>A non-profit organization that provides mental health counseling, drug and alcohol abuse treatment, parenting classes, teen leadership development training, emergency financial assistance etc. to youth and families in the Renton and Tukwila communities.</p>	<p>RYFS use the Strengthening Multi-Ethnic Families &amp; Communities curriculum to engage those parenting children ages 3-18 years old in discussions, learning and sharing about the job of parenting. Their monthly parenting support groups are coordinated to decrease feelings of isolation and increase feelings of support for those with a parenting role. The Kinship Support group meets monthly to bring together those parenting their relative children.</p>
<p><b>South East Seattle Education Coalition</b></p> <p>Southeast Seattle</p>	<p>A collaboration of community-based organizations, community activists, and other stakeholders working to improve schools in Southeast Seattle.</p>	<p>SESEC shares Information about education in SE Seattle; encourage communities of color to be actively engaged in education, and Educate funders and the educators about engaging communities of color.</p>
<p><b>White Center Community Development Association</b></p> <p>Highline</p>	<p>A non-profit organization originally charged with addressing a variety of issues that affect the quality of life for White Center residents like affordable housing and supporting small businesses. In 2007, the White Center CDA took on a new and expanded role in the community by becoming the home of the Making Connections initiative and acting as a neighborhood intermediary on behalf of the community.</p>	<p>Their Family Development program focuses on the “whole family” and includes opportunities for asset building for adults and youth. They conduct their work in family development primarily through partners like: the Puget Sound Educational Services District, White Center Promise, Community Schools Collaboration and many more. They implemented a school-based Family Connections cohort project that tracks improvements in civic engagement, student achievement and family asset building outcomes. Their culturally diverse team of advocates (Iraqi, Somali, Latino, Vietnamese, Samoan, African American, and Cambodian) has the skills to engage families in social networking, school readiness, early grade and family support strategies.</p>

<p><b>Washington State PTA</b> Statewide</p>	<p>A statewide membership and policy advocacy organization part of the National Parent Teacher Association. Their over 100,000 members include parents, students, educators and community members.</p>	<p>They provide technical assistance to local units in thousands of K-12 elementary schools and advocates for education-related policy at the state level. PTA members have access to year-round trainings and opportunities to become leaders in their schools. They offer an annual statewide training conference that attracts hundreds of members.</p>
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## IX. Appendix B

The following questionnaires were provided by the Road Map Project to OEO for interviewing different groups:

### National Researchers Interview Questions

1. What does the national landscape of family involvement in education look like right now?
2. In some contexts, there seems to have been a shift from a school-family partnership model to a parent-organizing model. What are your thoughts on that?
3. What distinctions/relationships are there with these terms, "*family involvement*", "*family engagement*" and "*family empowerment*"? Can these terms be thought of along a continuum or is there a better way to describe their relationship?
4. What are some promising new practices (i.e. collective impact efforts, district-level initiatives, etc.) that help move family-school partnerships out of the periphery and into the center of educational change?
5. What are ways to measure the effectiveness of such practices?
6. Where are examples of these practices happening?
7. What challenges exist at either the policy or the implementation level that prevent meaningful engagement/family-school partnerships from being fully realized?

## Parent Organizing Group Interview Questions

1. If the organization did not begin as a parent organizing group, how did it transition into one? Did you start with a mission around parent organizing or engagement? Was there a specific issue that generated the parent organizing or engagement?
2. How did the current educational work get started? Do you organize around other issues as well?
3. What is the role of youth either individually or as youth-led groups or organizations in supporting your parent organizing or engagement? Has the role of youth shifted over time? How and why has that role shifted?
4. How do you talk about your work in your community? Has that changed over time? Key messages? Terminology?
5. Where is your work based? School? Community? Faith-based? etc. Has that changed over time? If so, why?
6. What is the group's relationship, formal or informal, with schools? District leadership? Other city leadership? Systems relationship? Building based relationships?
7. Does the group actively connect or collaborate with other local parent organizing or engagement or programs or campaigns? Other parent services organizations? Is there any formal or informal local effort to link work and build collective capacity for parent organizing or engagement? If so, what?
8. How was the primary issue identified? How long have you been working on the most active issue? Has it changed over time? How and why?
9. How is the decision made as to which topic to focus on?
10. What are examples of the impacts? Individual? Group? Community? Schools? Districts? State?
11. Dr. Karen Mapp (2009) identifies three key elements of parent /family engagement. What are your key ideas or key learning's in each of these three areas:
  - a. Involvement (school-building events involvement, fundraisers; tools for at-home support)
  - b. Engagement (education system navigation, participation in school or district decisions, etc.)
  - c. Empowerment (organizing, advocacy, social capital and political capital enhancement)
12. What would you say are the 1-2 most important aspects of your organization, your model or your approach that have made you successful?

## **School District Family Engagement Department Written Questionnaire**

1. When and how did the Family Involvement department/office start?
  - a. *(For School districts that do not have a department/office: When and how did your family involvement efforts in your school district start?)*
  
2. Has your school board adopted family involvement policy? When was it adopted? Is it connected with Title I or is it separate? Please provide us with a copy.
  
3. How many employees are dedicated to family involvement work in your office? In the district?
  
4. Who do you report to and who reports to you?
  
5. How is the family involvement work funded in your school district? How is your department/office funded?
  
6. How do parents/family members know about and access your department/office?
  
7. Dr. Karen Mapp (2009) identifies three key elements of parent /family engagement. What are your key ideas or key learning's in each of these three areas:
  - a. Involvement (school-building events involvement, fundraisers; tools for at-home support)
  - b. Engagement (education system navigation, participation in school or district decisions, etc.)
  - c. Empowerment (organizing, advocacy, social capital and political capital enhancement)

## **School District Family Engagement Department Interview Questions**

1. How does your department/office view parent engagement in the context of student success? Are there particular areas you use parents strategically (i.e., early literacy, college navigation)?
2. What challenges do you experience in your work?
3. Who are your community partners in the work that you do? I.e. community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, government institutions, etc. How do you connect, interact, and collaborate with those partners?
4. Does your office develop annual family involvement action plans? If so, who signs off on those plans? Are there district plans and school building plans? Could you share a copy?
5. Do you utilize any particular model, framework or rubric for your plan or goals?
6. How do you monitor the implementation of your goals and/or implementation of your action plan?

## Community Organizations Written Questionnaire

1. When and how did your organization start?
2. What is your mission and vision?
3. How is your organization funded? Are you a nonprofit? A membership organization?
4. How many employees do you have?
5. Would you identify your organization as a service provider, community organizer, or other?
6. What school district(s) do you work with?
7. Which ethnic specific populations do you serve?
8. What are your organization's goals relating to K-12 public education?
9. What would you estimate is the percentage of your organization's work being devoted to K-12 public education?
10. Has your organization always worked on parent/family engagement in education issues? If not, when did your work transition into that area?
11. Besides parent/family engagement, what other issues relating K-12 education does your organization focus on?
12. How do you talk about your work in your community? Key messages?
13. Who are your partners in the work that you do? I.e. schools, other community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, institutions, etc.
14. How do you connect, interact and collaborate with those partners?

## Community Organization Interview Questionnaire

1. What would you say are the most important aspects of your organization that have made it successful?
2. Have you developed a model or approach that really works? In what areas?
3. How many parents/family members of public school students are currently part of your organization?
4. How do parents/family members become involved with your organization? Do you have a recruitment system?
5. Do you organize and/or mobilize parents/families around any particular issue, topic or cause related to K-12 public education?
6. How are decisions made in your organization as to which topic to focus on? How long have you been working on the most active issue? Has it changed over time? How and why?
7. What are examples of your work that result in parents becoming more engaged in public schools?
8. Please share success stories that illustrate your work with parents in the context of K-12 education?
9. Do youth/students play any role in your parent/family engagement work? Has the role of youth shifted over time? If so, why and how?
10. What do you think would really help take your work to the next level? Increased coordination? Increased resources? Increased visibility?

## Parent Focus Group Questions

- Please tell us about your school experiences growing up.
- What does the term parent/family engagement mean to you?
- As a parent, what do you believe is your role in your child's education?
- What has been your experience in supporting your child's education?
- How do you (or how did you learn to) navigate the school system?
- What is your current relationship with your child's school?
- What barriers (i.e. time, language, etc.) affect your participation with your child's education?
- What do you want the school system to know about you and your family?
- How often does your child's school involve you in school-building decisions or school improvement efforts?
- What expectations do you have for your child in school and beyond school?
- What would help you be better informed/involved with the Road Map project?

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