

Parents

Intro IDEA 24 Levels of Parental Participation: From involvement to engagement to empowerment

It is impossible for the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) to engage with IPS parents, grand-parents, guardians, and families at the highest levels without opening IPS to public ownership, and thus the real participation of parents in determining their own district's destiny.

Hence, the district's work with parents must be understood as one of the most significant democratic acts all stakeholders and teachers, in particular, can perform.

OpportunINDY can help parents, together with teachers, to create a political community to challenge the undemocratic structures of schooling. This would validate the fact:

- it is the parent who is the parent or guardian of the child in a public school
- she/he is the constituent who votes in or out school boards and the state superintendent
- it is the parent as taxpayer who pays the wages of all public school employees including school board members, the state and district superintendent, and principals and teachers

Parents are thus the very foundation of public education, yet in most cases they are consistently at the bottom of the school system's power structure.

Appreciating the role of parents and the authentic democratic power they inherently possess offers IPS the most honest and viable parental support of public education.

IDEA 24 Levels of Parental Participation: From involvement to engagement to empowerment

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Levels-of-Parental-Participation-From-involvement-to-engagement-to-empowerment-.pdf>

Intro IDEA 25 Parent Power Talking Points: Preserving the public good of public education: Enabling all* parents to be a part of the politics of public education

The past and current politics of the parental participation of racial and cultural minorities, due to the imbalance of power between them and their public schools, does not reflect America's democracy and its promise that our public schools would serve the common good.

“Education for the common good is a moral philosophy of the curriculum of public schools.”
~ Philip Phenix

Our public schools cannot serve the public good if parents of all colors whose home culture represents the dominant culture (European American middle-class language, norms, and values) function better in parent-school relationships than others. Seen and treated as social equals by school staff, middle-class parents experience 2-ways conversations where they are listened to and welcomed to participate in the democratic school decision-making process.

However, those parents from racial and cultural minorities who are not members of the *status quo* are not treated as social equals and experience 1-way communication with their schools.

Parent Power's “Talking Points” intend to help these parents challenge schools that may undervalue their perspectives, and thus do not consult them.

IDEA 25 Parent Power Talking Points: Preserving the public good of public education: Enabling all* parents to be a part of the politics of public education

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Parent-Power-Talking-Points-Preserving-the-public-good-of-public-schools-Enabling-all-parents-to-be-a-part-of-the-politics-of-public-education.pdf>

***Intro* IDEA 26 Is parental involvement “bait & switch”?**

“Is parental involvement bait & switch?” explores the reasons and solutions around the contradictions inherent in current parent-school relations:

- charters lure parents in via school *choice*, but once the school is chosen, limit parent *voice*
- schools say they want involvement while at the same time barriers are set up: they consider involvement worthwhile only if it relates to the parent’s children rather than to the broader issues related to the school and society at large
- parents whose child/ren are in the school, whose taxes contribute to the wages of school personnel, who vote in or out school boards and the state superintendent, and thus should feel empowered, have feelings of inadequacy about their ability to make important school-related decisions
- parents need to become aware that under the current “choice” angle to school improvement, national organizations with national agendas for corporate school reform (privatization) are out to get their support for that organization and that organization’s critique of current public education—yet do not encourage the same critical stance by these same parents towards the organization itself
- if any person/s or organizations who seek the support of lower-income families do not also talk about eradicating poverty and other social toxins, then these same families need to question the purposes of the person/s or the organizations

IDEA 26 Is parental involvement “bait & switch”?

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Is-parental-involvement-bait-switch.pdf>

***Intro* IDEA 27 Parent Power, Indianapolis: Filling in “The Parent Gap”**

Stardust (Delana Ivey) and DeShawn Waiss were 2 IPS parents who discovered that some of the teachers teaching their children at the IPS No. 56 (Montessori school) lacked Montessori credentials. Following proper school district channels and protocol, they were able to initiate a more authentic Montessori teaching staff. This experience empowered these women to create Parent Power the fall of 2010.

We have all heard of the Achievement Gap, what about the Parent Gap? This distance between “what is needed and what is actual” has existed since the beginning of public education in America. Schools want parents to be “fans of the team”: supporting their school and their child/ren’s classroom teacher—perhaps answer the phone or volunteer at school events. Schools do not want parents to be “owners” of the team: help run the school, help hire and fire principal and/or staff, and help control the budget and school climate.

If/when schools/teachers limit what parents can do and control the process about who decides the role/s of parents, it may *not* help to bridge the “Parent Gap.”

IDEA 27 Parent Power, Indianapolis: Filling in “The Parent Gap”

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Parent-Power-Indianapolis-Filling-in-the-Parent-Gap.pdf>

***Intro* IDEA 28 Local School Councils: Returning ownership of our public schools directly to the public**

The Indianapolis Public Schools is run by the 7 elected Board of School Commissioners. They hire the superintendent whose administration carries out the board’s goals. The district, run by the superintendent, hires all personnel including principals. These school leaders are assigned to the district’s schools. The districts can also remove/replace a principal. A school’s staff, parents, or community have little or no direct say in the hiring or any firing of a principal.

As a consequence of the above policy scenario, a principal owes allegiance to the district.

This is good for the political survival of the district’s superintendent and administration because they have control over the principal/s. This may be good for the superintendent, but not necessarily for parents who can face a person who in instances can be the main barrier to parent power/responsibility since, as noted, the power rests with the district, not them.

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-school-principal-as-main-barrier-to-genuine-parental-involvement.pdf> If any ideas or actions by parents are seen as worrisome to principal and so could make them look bad to “downtown,” are ignored or discouraged.

This is not the case with Local School Councils, and thus why school boards and superintendents do not support this level of public ownership and democracy

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<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Local-School-Councils-Returning-ownership-of-our-public-schools-directly-to-the-public.pdf>

***Intro* IDEA 29 We need a new coalition of solidarity among urban teachers and urban parents**

According to Edward Olivos (*The Power of Parents*) working class, poor, and minority parents are not blind to the injustices found throughout the history of the public education. Many sense the public system is not failing, but is doing exactly as designed. Thus, many urban parents realize they too must participate actively in the struggle for educational justice.

What is lacking is a culture of collaboration and solidarity between parents and the educators who serve their children--a coalition that will reshape the destiny and transform the school system to meet parental needs and highlight their strengths. For Olivos, educators have been distanced and suspicious of poor and minority parents for far too long. This kept teachers from understanding the power these parents possess as agents of change and social transformation.

IDEA 29 We need a new coalition of solidarity among urban teachers and urban parents

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/We-need-a-new-coalition-of-solidarity-among-urban-teachers-and-urban-parents.pdf>