

Community-based education and the fight for educational justice: Uncovering tensions and possibilities through a living curriculum

Philadelphia Education Justice Research Collective

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Introduction & Overview

- Philadelphia Community Schools Task Force
- Community Schools Ambassador Program



The Concentric Circle

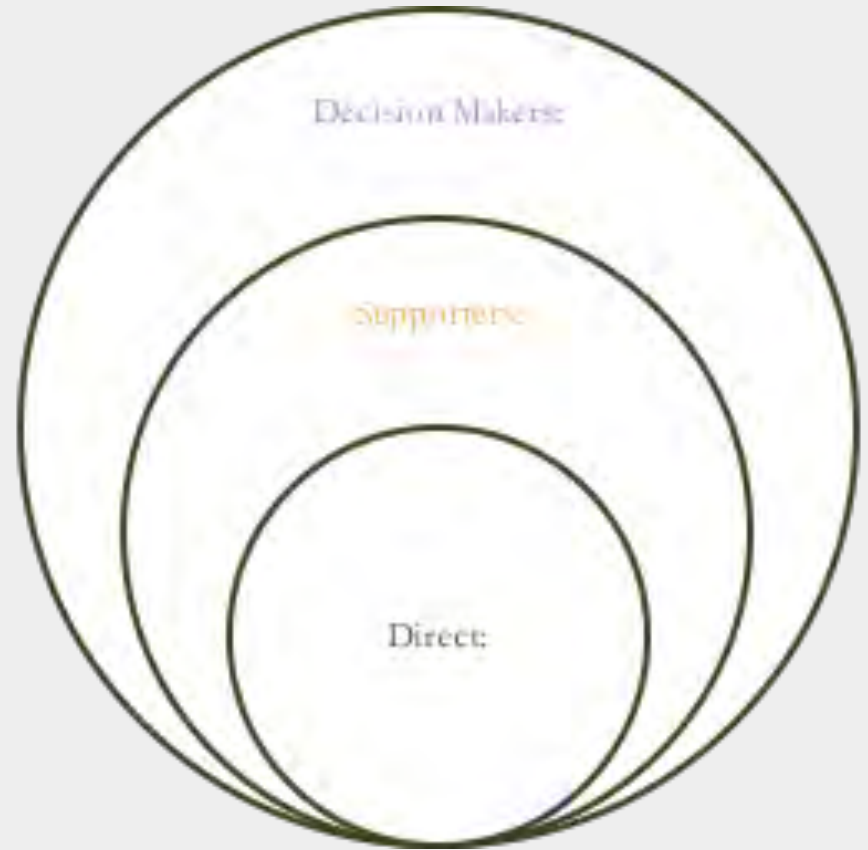
Positionality
Race, Class, Ethnicity, Sexual
Identity, Gender, etc.

Direct: Listening, sharing expertise and impacting
change

Supporter: Listening and leveraging resources

Decision Makers: Listening and sharing
institutional knowledge

→ COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS



The Philadelphia Educational Justice Research
Collective (2017)

Context of Public Education in Philly

Edu. Justice orgs call for a change in the funding formula that reflected racism and classism in the ways schools received resources

2001
"School Reform Commission"

Local educational Justice Organizations have small and large victories against the onslaught of privaization/ charterization of our schools

2012
64 schools flagged for closure

PCAPS, other orgs and School Communities fight to keep their schools open and public

2013
24 schools closed

Local school fight victory at Steele Elementary pushes PCAPS to advocate for the Community Schools model in Philly. The CS Taskforce pushes Mayor Elect Kenney to adopt the model

2015
Kenney runs on an Education platform and wins. Commits to 25 CS schools in first term.

1st year AP: sharing the CS model with community members & explaining: "What a community school is" and "How you apply to be a CS"

2016'17
First Cohort of Community Schools

2nd year AP:
We shift focus to From the Ground Up with Community Schools as a tool towards transformative schools that are Community Run

TODAY!

Data collection & Analysis

Ambassadors Program Participants:

- 2 Focus Groups
- 6 Post-participation surveys
- 1:1 interviews: 13 completed
- Video recordings: 2 AP Sessions
- Field notes
- Cultural artifacts

Community Schools Task Force Participants:

- 1:1 interviews: 13 completed
- Field notes & observations
- Cultural artifacts
- Ed Justice Organizing Timeline

Data analysis: Inductive thematic analysis -- “From the ground up”
(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Today: Key Questions

1. What are the tensions between a centralized curriculum and facilitating spaces that recognize and build upon people's diverse lived experiences?
2. How do these tensions and their intersections support the evolution of the living curriculum in ways that effectively uncover and challenge neoliberal education policies and practices?

Community Schools Ambassador Program

Living Curriculum:
Evolving agenda &
practices

Example activity: One of
your most powerful
learning experiences



Reimagining Partnership Coordination

Z (mother, organizer, research team member): *“You definitely got into our transitioning goals with PhillySUN just getting to the point of understanding that with the community schools it’s not just to bring in partnerships to give people services or aid people for a small period of time, but trying to make these schools more community run, more than necessarily what their namesake is, and they need to be self sustaining, even when they don’t want a certain partnership or partner pulls out. These communities need to know how to function on their own and to utilize the resources and people that are already there.”*

D (higher education/education justice activist): *“What you described is what I think of, but what I heard about was all these services that are dependent on funding and could be gone just like that {snaps fingers} - Like L’s job.”*

Partnership Coordination II

Evan: “But I’m very happy to say that my role as a SAC member at N. Elementary is supported by the school’s principal which I understand is a rare occurrence in the public education system. So we have a very good working relationship and are able to bring in a lot of outside resources to support the children in the school and kind of help change the climate because N. Elementary has had a very bad reputation for the past couple of years. I am eagerly pouring myself into that right now.”

Tina: “The donuts with dads was on Facebook, we see it, you PLEASE and you're a father sitting here at the table, oftentimes it’s difficult to engage parents much less fathers. Evan, please keep doing what you’re doing. I mean it’s a lot of work on your shoulders. It’s a lot of work.”

Amy: - {after Evan describes more of his work at N. Elementary} that sounds like the role of the community, what the community {staff, site director, coordinator} people should be doing

Positionality, Cross-Dialogue, & Pathways of Participation

Amy (mother of children in public and charter schools; social worker) : “My number one goal and I try to be clear about this in all the work that I do, is to connect parents and teachers. I feel like that is extremely lacking in our schools today and I feel that there is a systematic attempt on the part of people in power, specifically school districts, um speaking of Philadelphia in particular, the SRC [School Reform Commission] and others to, place barriers between teachers and parents. I feel like teachers and parents together are a force, for kids in general, more specifically for black and brown kids.”

Pathways of Participation II

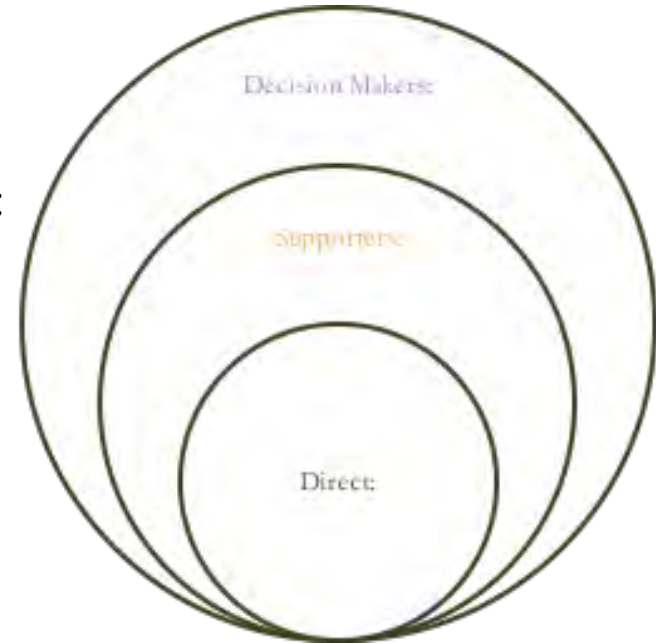
David (higher ed, white, male, education activist): “I think providing opportunities for parents and community members to get some basic training or whatever the word, mentoring, on how to do this... That’s not something that comes naturally to a lot of people, but people can learn... start thinking in terms of the whole rather than ‘this individual’... I think there are ways that people can learn those skills.”

Positionality, Cross-Dialogue, Pathways [LIVING CURRICULUM]

The research has also been a living, evolving process...

How Does our Data Inform the Realities of Facilitation:

- We can't always control who is in the room
- People's past and present lived experiences can trouble their stakeholder positions
- Language circulating in institutions enters into how different stakeholders speak
- Cross-dialogue is crucial for clarification, demystifying, trust-building, learning, breaking isolation, bridging divides, etc.



Positionality II

Evan (father of children in public and charter schools): “It does not have to be this complicated...We should be grooming people to understand what their power is” (Parent)

Sam (teacher): “Want to better facilitate convos with parents given my **positionality**. As a white man teacher at the school. There were times last year I wanted to steer it back in another direction, but I was very **aware** of how that might look, and didn’t want to turn parents off.”



Questions & Conversation

THANK YOU!
Philly Education Justice Research Collective

