Building a Database for Community Engagement

A Guide for our Local Associations

BEFORE YOU BEGIN…ASSESS YOUR COMMUNITY AND YOUR RESOURCES

Educators who have been through difficult impasse situations or intensive campaign activities often have come away realizing how little they know about their communities…or worse yet, they have come away realizing that they had few, if any, allies in the community.

For a local association planning to get involved with community action, assessment is a necessary first step…necessary, that is, if the community action plan is to be focused.

Who really makes decisions in a community? Often people who don't appear in newspapers make the real decisions. What organizations are the most influential in terms of community decision making? They may not be the largest groups; instead, they might be small private clubs or even local firehalls. Which politicians, or contributors to politicians, can impact a decision? Generally behind every school board member stands one or two decision makers who have an extreme impact on how board members think and vote. What organizations are most likely to support than a PTA; or, it may be a local drug treatment center, rather than another public employee organization.

These are the kinds of questions that assessments begin answering. From the names of community organizations to the number of registered voters…from the most influential churches to how many ethnic clubs there are in your school district. These questions and more need to be addressed before focused planning can begin.

Following are sample internal resources and community assessment surveys.

These surveys are a starting point for planning. These surveys, modified to fit the needs of your local, should be the beginning steps…steps taken before any program planning begins.

TAP EXISTING RESOURCES

How many of your members live in, and vote in, your school district? How many of your members have immediate members of their family living in, and voting in, the district? How many belong to civic, community, religious or social groups within the community?

Each member that fits one of those categories represents a resource that shouldn't go untapped. Before local associations begin planning strategies to build relationships with other community organizations, the best step is to find out how many existing points of access exist through the membership of the local.

Several of our members belong to the League of Women Voters; many are active in local Democratic or Republican parties; many teachers, or their spouses, are active in church groups. And, many teachers have mothers and or fathers active in senior citizens groups.

Those names can form the nucleus of a community action program. If the local, for instance, wants to form a speakers bureau, local teachers who are members of community organizations will be much more effective in getting teachers on other organizations' programs, than will a letter coming from the association.

Finding out the existing resources of the local's membership is not a difficult process. Following is a sample Association Resources Survey which will give the local a wealth of information that will help in planning community action programs, political action programs, or even impasse resolution strategies.

INTERNAL RESOURCES SURVEY

On several occasions in the past few years the association has discussed initiating a community action program, or attempted to conduct an intensive get-out-the-vote campaign. This year we are attempting to find out how many teachers in the association already have contacts with influential segments of the community, are registered voters, are active in politics, and how many teachers are connected to the community through their immediate families. The following information is designed to help us measure how much potential contact we already have through the resources of our own members, to the community. Your help in completing this survey would be appreciated. All information will remain confidential. The only results that will be made public would be to give those responding to the survey an overview of how active, and how much a part of the community teachers are. Please return the survey to your building representative by (date)_____.(Change survey for ESP application)

Personal Data

Other Experience

Name

Have You Ever Done
(Check Appropriate Area(s):

Home Address

Public Speaking

Home Phone

Writing

School

Photography

Subject/Grade Taught

Advertising

Number of years teaching experience

Radio/TV   _____

Political campaign work

Educational Background

Master's Degree Area(s)

Bachelor's Degree Area(s)

Doctoral Degree Area(s)

Master's Degree Area(s)

Area(s) of Certification

(continued)

VOTER REGISTRATION INFORMATION (continued)

Are you a registered voter? Yes_____   No_____
Do you vote in this district?_____ if so, in what precinct?
if not, where are you registered?
Are you active in either the Republican or Democratic parties? Yes_____ No_____ Other_____
Indicate the number of immediate family members who hare also registered voters within the district (i.e., spouse mother, father, sisters, brothers, etc.)
Are any of them active within either the Republican or Democratic parties? If so, indicate in what capacity

INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Please identify community organizations in which you are active (i.e., civic, community, labor, ethnic, religious, social, athletic, etc.). Do not omit any organization of which you are a part, from active church membership to bowling leagues, to the Sons of Italy, to the League of Women Voters. Also, indicate if you are an officer or an active committee member in any of them; for example, Chairperson of the Program committee, President of a Young Adults group in your church, etc).

Name of Organization

Office or Committee

Are any members of your immediate family members in similar organizations? If so, please indicate the same information.

Name of organization and office or committee position held.

Are you a club sponsor, coach, or active participant in any outside-of-school youth groups? Yes_____ No
If yes, which

Do you have any contacts with local reporters, news directors, owner, or editorial board members of local newspapers, radio stations, or TV stations? If so, please indicate which media outlet and your contact:

BUILDING LEVEL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

Building Name

Building Representative

1. The Parents Teachers Association (PTA/PTO) in your schools is:
    A. controlled by the principal in favor of the faculty
    B. controlled by the principal against the faculty
    C. not controlled by the principal
    D. not involved in real school problems
    E. poorly attended by parents
    F. poorly attended by faculty members
    G. isolated from the faculty and the faculty from it
    H. not really functioning
    I. developing into an effective group

2. The PTA/PTO president of your building is

Address

Phone

3. That president would best be described as (check one)

    _____ Pro-teacher _____ neutral _____ anti-teacher

4. The meeting dates of the PTA/PTO are

5. Communities that function within the local PTA/PTO are

6. The approximate number of teachers that attend PTA/PTO meetings is

7. Are teachers office holders in the local PTA/PTO? _____ Yes _____ No

8. If yes, what offices are held and who are the teachers?

9. Name the most vocal parents in the school

10. Are there any issues in the school that have generated parent involvement recently?

If so, describe the issues and involvement.

11. In general terms, describe the socio-economic makeup of the parents in your local school area (i.e. blue collar, lower middle, or professional, etc.)

12. If a secondary school, are there any active parent groups such as an athletic booster's club or band parents? If so, list names of groups officers and meeting schedule.

13. Have any community groups made an impact on your building principal within the last twelve months? If so, indicate group and situation.

14. What are the most pressing problems in the school?

DON'T FORGET THE SCHOOL BOARD ...

One of the most important groups in the community for teachers is the school board. Because of its continuous impact teachers and the association's relationship with other forces in the community, the school board deserves in-depth analysis.

Most association leaders are all too familiar with the experience of having a board member who was elected with association help, turn around the following spring and vote against a teacher salary increase or approve disastrous program cutbacks.

An effective process is to gather information on the board of education and continually evaluate their performance.

1. Compile and maintain a comprehensive file on each board of education member. The committee could use the School Board Member Information from that appears at the end of this section.

2. Monitor every board of education meeting.

3. Keep a record of how each board of education member votes on key issues and make a periodic report to the leadership evaluating the performance of each board member. These evaluations may be reported to the general membership, and perhaps to the community, from time to time.

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER INFORMATION

Name / District

Name / District

Name / District

Name / District

Name / District

Name / District

Name / District

Identify community organizations, service clubs, women's organizations, minority groups, etc. and determine the following information:

Org. Name	President	Phone	Membership	Meeting Dates	Ed. Comm Yes No

The same information should be identified for churches in the community.

Name of Church	Membership	Young Adults Yes No	Senior Citizens Club Yes No	Minister Priest, Rabbi

LABOR ORGANIZATIONS

	Name of Union	Priv./Public	President	App. Membership
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

Major Businesses (list the top 5-10 businesses in the area; some might be listed because of the number of employees; others because of influence.)

	Name of Business	President	App. # of Employees	Unionized Yes	No
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					

TAXPAYER'S ORGANIZATIONS

	Name of Organization	President	App. Membership
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

SENIOR CITIZEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

	Name of Organization	President	App. Membership
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

NEWS MEDIA

1.   **Radio**   **Manager**

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

2.   **TV/Cable**   **Manager**

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

3.   **Newspapers**   **Editor**

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

4.   **Social Media Networks**
                                         Facebook-Twitter-Linkedin

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

Considering other community issues and concerns:
    (1) Who are the two men you believe are most influential regarding each issue?

    (2) Who are the two women you believe to be most influential regarding each issue?

        Issue of Concern

Education (reorganization, bond   Men:
issues, special education, vocational, etc.

                                    Women:

Health (hospital drives, mental   Men:
health, retirement facilities, etc.)

                                    Women:

Industry (industrial development,   Men:
 main street improvement,
Chamber of Commerce.)

                                    Women:

Youth (Scouts, YMCA, 4-H,   Men:
 summer recreation)

                                    Women:

Social concerns (senior citizens,   Men:
housing, etc.)

                                    Women:

Cultural (community theater, art,   Men:
music, festivals, drama, etc.)

Women:

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

A. Country Club Set. Of those already listed, which belong to the country club? Please designate their position on the club board of directors with an asterisk (*).

 1.

 2.

 3.

 4.

 5.

 6.

 7.

 8.

 9.

10.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

A. In your opinion, which are the *five* most influential groups in this community?
B. In your opinion, who are the *two* most influential people in each of the groups you named?

Name of Group   **Person most influential**

                                                 1.

1.   2.

                                                 1.

2.   2.

                                                 1.

3.   2.

                                                 1.

4.   2.

| | 1. |
| 5. | 2. |

C. Thinking of women's groups in particular, use the same approach as above

Name of Group	**Person most influential**
	1.
1.	2.
	1.
2.	2.
	1.
3.	2.

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1. How many PTAs/PTOs are in the community?

2. How many PTAs/PTOs are pro-teacher?

3. How does the community view the superintendent?

4. What community organizations have challenged the superintendent in the last twelve months?

5. What community organizations have the greatest influence on the superintendent?

6. What community organizations have the greatest influence on the school board?

7. Does your superintendent run the school board or is it vice-versa?

8. Which of the board members are the most influential with other board members?

9. If the board is split, what are the factions and which board members lead the factions?

10. Which board members are up for re-election this year?

11. How does the community view those board members?

12. What community organizations does each board member belong to?

13. What social or religious activities are individual board members involved in?

14. What are the occupations of each of the board members?

15. Which newspaper or radio-TV outlet is most influential in giving school news?

16. Is that media outlet pro-board or pro-teacher?

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Population of the community?

Percentage of population which is minority?

Be specific (i.e. 12% black; 5% Spanish-speaking, etc.)

Number of public school students?

Number of private school students?

Number of Registered voters? Republican   Democrat   ___ Other _____

Number of voters who voted in the last school board election?

Number of voters who voted in the last school budget election?

Political Office Holders (senate, legislature, etc.)

	Name	Occupation
A.1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Chairperson of Political Parties   **Occupation & Party**

Republican: County/Ward Chairperson   **Affiliation**

Democratic: County/Ward Chairperson

Governmental Agencies   **Occupation & Party**
A. City Council   **Affiliation**

   1. Mayor

   2. Councilmen

   (a)

   (b)

   (c)

   (d)

   (e)

   (f)

   (g)

B. County Commission   **Occupation & Party**
                                                                                      Affiliation

   1. Chairperson

   2. Commissioners:

   (a)

   (b)

   (c)

   (d)

   (e)

   (f)

   (g)

C. Board of Education   **Occupation**

   1. President

   2. BOE Members:

  (a)

  (b)

  (c)

  (d)

  (e)

  (f)

  (g)

D. Hospital Board   **Occupation**

   1. Chairman

   2. Members:

  (a)

  (b)

  (c)

  (d)

  (e)

  (f)

  (g)

Ministerial Alliance

  President

           Member   Church

  1.

  2.

  3.

  4.

  5.

  6.

  7.

  8.

  9.

10.

Date

Board Member's Name

Position (Occupation)

Home Address

City, State, Zip

Home Phone Number

Place of Business

Business Address

City, State, Zip

Business Phone Number

Years on the Board

Approximate Age

Board Positions (officer, committees, etc.)

Current Term Expires (Mo., Yr.)

Political Party Affiliation

—––—

Political Philosophy (Estimated):
        _ Very Liberal   _ Moderate Conservative   _ Middle of the Road

        _ Moderate Liberal   _ Very Conservative

Partisan Political Offices Held (Year, Jurisdiction)

Primary Source of Income:

FINALLY, COMPILING THE INFORMATION...

The last step in the assessment process is the most time consuming, but also from a long-range standpoint, the most valuable. That step is beginning a card file **or creating an electronic database** that will be the backbone of community action projects, political action efforts and impasse support drives.

If you choose to use a card file, the following information will be helpful.

The association should develop school-by-school card files on each teacher. These files should be organized alphabetically, by voting area and according to organizational affiliations. That means five sets of files, but the five sets, once established, will make the local's job much easier in a number of areas.

During membership drives, for instance, the file of teachers by school can be used as a record keeping device. During political action drives, the files by school, and by voting precinct can be used to measure strength in a given precinct. During community action projects, the local can go to the section of cards marked League of Women Voters, and instantly check how many teachers are members of the League.

Teachers, however, are only the beginning of the file system. As a local association moves into community action, the file system should grow. Additions should also be cross filed – alphabetically, by voting precinct, and by organization.

Those citizen names will form the nucleus of a potential mailing list for community newsletters; they will be the target group on get-out-the-pro-teacher-vote drives; they could be the focus of a support-teacher drive during impasse. Again the filing system, if cross filed, can allow for pulling a name alphabetically, pulling it for voting purposes, and cross checking it for potential support within a community organization.

If you choose to use an electronic database, the information can be sorted in any number of ways to target the audience that will be the best source for the association to go to in different situations.

SAMPLE EDUCATOR FILE CARD

Name

                   last   first   middle initial

School   Grade Subject

Registration: Democrat   Republican

Voting Area

Home Address

Home Phone

         Member   _Non-Member

Organization(s) Teacher is Active in:

Comments:

SAMPLE CITIZEN FILE CARD

Name

                   last   first   middle initial

Home Address

Home Phone

Voting Area

Organization(s) Person is Active in:

Comments: