Parent Participatory Evaluation: Community-Led Systems Change in a Public School District

Association of Metropolitan School Districts
November 13th, 2019
After today, you will...

- Have an understanding of Parent Participatory Evaluation (PPE) and how this research and evaluation approach resulted in parent-led engagement at Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS)
- Hear from some of our parent evaluators
- Gain insight into what it takes for this work to be successful and facilitate change
Overview of PPE
“Women or men cannot understand or explain the world we live in or the real choices we have as long as the sciences describe and explain the world primarily from the perspectives of the lives of the dominant groups.”  

*Harding (1991)*

By recognizing science as a set of local practices it becomes possible to “decentre” it and develop a framework within which all knowledge systems can be equitable compared.

*Turnball (1997)*
Minneapolis Public Schools promises an inspirational educational experience in a safe, welcoming environment for all diverse learners to acquire the tools and skills necessary to confidently engage in the global community. To honor this vision, the District has utilized participatory evaluation, which empowers the people who are closest to the issue to take the lead in the evaluation.

MPS has supported a Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE) program for five years, and launched the PPE program last year. By partnering with students and parents, MPS engages key stakeholders to identify opportunities for improvement and partner on innovative solutions that best reflect the priorities of our community.
Engaging the Community in Research

- MPS serves a racially and ethnically diverse community of students and families
- MPS has experienced limited success engaging these diverse communities in research and evaluation
- In a recent survey, MPS collected data from over 3,000 family members, but only 16% identified as a person of color, 11% spoke a language other than English at home, and only 14% reported living on the North side of the city.
PPE Model in MPS is Built on Partnership

Engagement & External Relations
- Authentic relationships
- Parent engagement
- Communication
- Language

Research, Evaluation, & Assessment
- Data collection methods
- Analysis
- Identifying Themes
- Reporting

Parent Evaluators
- Community connections (African American, American Indian, Hmong, Latinx, and Somali)
- Experience with MPS
How can a school *value and respect* your child for who they are?

2,272+ parents reached within the African American, American Indian, Hmong, Latino, and Somali communities in 2018-2019 PPE program.
For families to feel **valued and respected** at MPS schools, parents need:

1. Ongoing commitment that **staff will learn about and embed students’ cultures and histories** into their instruction and schoolwide practices.

2. **Positive and accessible communication** that builds relationships between parents and teachers to partner in support of each child in MPS.

3. **Staff-especially teacher and school leaders-who look like and speak the languages** represented in our schools.

4. Programming and courses throughout the **academic experience that reflect and value the cultures and histories** of MPS students.

5. A **system of support that empowers parents to advocate** for and support their child’s development, especially within special education.

6. A **safe** school experience.

7. Clear communication about schools’ expectations for behavior and **equitable treatment in response to behavior**.
How Have Findings Produced Change?

- Increased budget for **Interpretation and Translation** services
- Hired additional **Recruitment and Retention Coordinator** to increase staff of color
- Increased budget for Arts department for **more culturally-specific arts displays**
- Increased Special Education Cultural Liaisons working weeks to include projects that **improve relevancy and accessibility of parent communication**
- Added a **full time teacher for Hmong language** course at Henry High School
- Added a **full time teacher for Somali Studies** course at Heritage Academy
Parent Evaluator Panel
Allison Waukau
Dulce de la Rosa
Jerry Lee
Mahamed Cali
Sarah Washington
Facilitating Systems Change: What does it take?
Systems Change Framework

- Advocate for Community Driven Solutions
- Build Relationships and Redistribute Power
- Shift Mindsets

Systems Change Framework (Kania, Kramer, Senge 2018)
Core Component of PPE: Facilitating Use & Action

Culturally-Specific Groups’ Findings & Recommendations + Themes Across Groups

11 Memos with Specific Recommendation for MPS Owner
Additional Core Components of PPE

Shared Power
Between district staff and parents

Compensating Parents
Providing stipends for the work

Aligned with District Decision-Making Process
Parents gain awareness of district wide processes

Evaluation and Engagement Partnership
Cross-divisional work and equity-minded staff

Time
Need to allot adequate time to the program (including interpretation and translation services) and process of progress monitoring
**Contract Model**

_Hired_ PPE graduates to collect parent voice for Equity and Diversity Impact Assessment on Student Placement Process.

Utilizing parents’ prior experience and expertise in collecting data.

Limited choice and parent leadership on design of data collection tools.

**Site-Based Model**

_Two-year pilot, starting this year_

Model will run out of two MPS schools in North Minneapolis.

Initiative will explore the potential for site-based PPE to leverage more tangible change at the school level.
Questions?

https://rea.mpls.k12.mn.us/parent_participatory_evaluation