



Organizing Parents on a School Level

If you're feeling fired up by the information in this toolkit and what you see in your child's classroom, the first step to working toward change at your school will be gathering like-minded parents and community members to join the cause.

Parent advocacy works! Think of parent-led health advocacies like Mothers Against Drunk Driving, which was started by one mother in 1980, and has helped reduce the amount of deaths related to drunk driving by half.

Organizing Strengthens School Communities



A key characteristic of high-performing schools is a high level of parent and community involvement. [Studies](#) show multiple [benefits](#) to students: higher grade point averages, enrollment in more challenging programs, better attendance, improved behavior, and better social skills.



Parent engagement is increasingly supported. Since 2018, the U.S. Department of Education has invested nearly \$100 million to support family engagement. The [Carnegie Corporation of New York](#), a partner, emphasizes that “[family engagement](#) must be seen as a core element of effective and equitable education practice.”



Working together is more effective than working alone. If you find each other and share ideas and resources, you amplify each other's effect! [Community schools](#) are one success story.



Parent support groups keep individual parents clear, grounded, and healthy. Local organizing is often arduous and tiring. When we have others on the same path as us, we can give and receive support, which [reduces our anxiety and stress](#). We are stronger together.



Resources

- [Organizing for School Reform](#)
- [Twenty Years, Ten Lessons: Community Schools](#)



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Where Can We Begin in Organizing Parents?



Start here!

- **Every movement needs a group of leaders, and it begins with you.** Are you committed to taking this on?
- **Empower other leaders. Invite diversity and co-creation.** Who can you invite to join you?
- **Cultivate critical skills.** Assess yourself and look for co-leaders who complement you.

Qualities:

- Passionate and driven
 - Respectful and open
 - Relational and supportive
 - Strategic and organized
- **Identify who you can approach.** You can find co-leaders and allies among teachers, principals, superintendents, school counselors or therapists, parents, parent organizations (PTA, PTO, Dad's clubs, etc.), teachers union members, school board members, etc.
 - **Get the “lay of the land.”** What are other parents worried about or interested in? What is the school doing or not doing? After some discussions, a natural direction will present itself. The direction might involve one-on-one conversations, additional outreach, organizing a book discussion, giving a presentation, hosting a panel of experts, or something entirely different. Be open, curious, and willing to try new things.
 - **Don't try to convince anyone.** Share your passion, authentically, and you will attract like-minded individuals.
 - **Embrace trial and error.** Every obstacle is an opportunity for growth. Remember that there is no blueprint for this! You will evolve through trial and error, iteration and adaption. You will have to learn new skills on this journey—and that's awesome!
 - **Seek support.** [The Screen Time Action Network](https://www.screenstime.org/action-network) has multiple work groups and a robust [resource library](#) to support your efforts. Aligned community organizations like [Heed The Children](#), [Everschool](#), or the [Phone Free School Movement](#) offer additional resources and community support to keep organizers like you motivated and going.

