



Power Mapping

Understanding Your Local School District & Knowing Who to Talk To



Great!
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Introduction

This tool is designed to empower you as parents to effectively navigate your local school district. We'll be exploring the concept of "power mapping" – a strategic approach to understanding the key players and decision-making processes within your district.



This toolkit was adapted from a presentation by Luis Ortiz, ConnCAN, to GreatSchools' 2024 Catalyzing Community-led High School Transformation fellowship which equips parent leaders to drive change in their high schools.

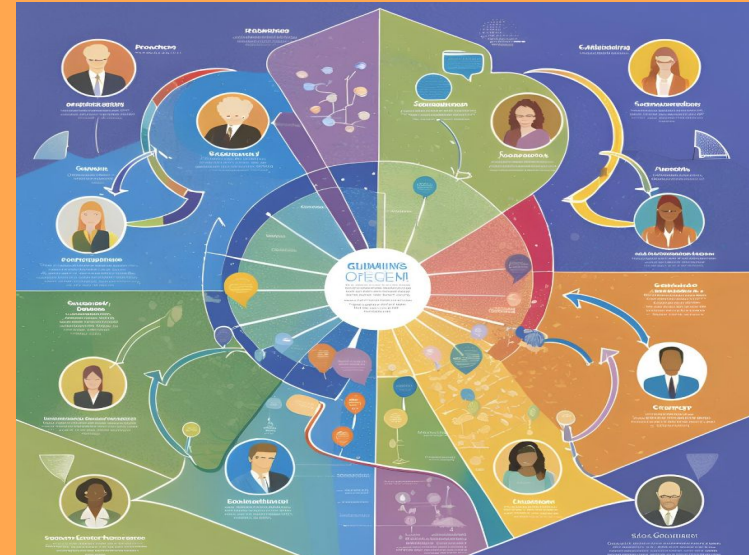
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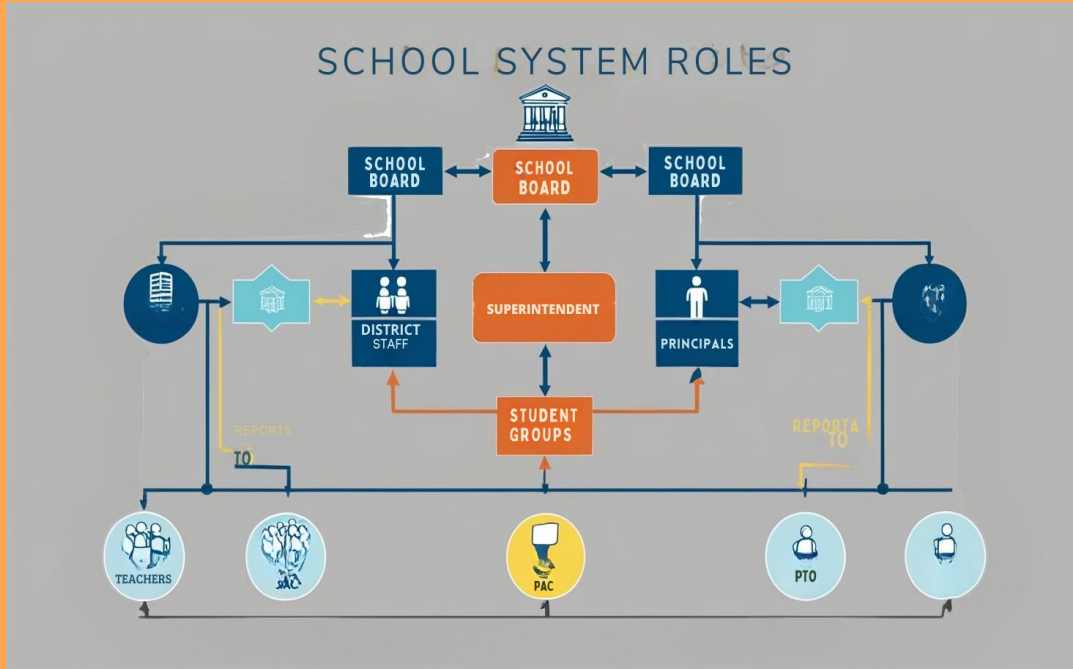


What - A strategy to identify key players in your school or school district

Why - Power Mapping helps you understand who influences decisions, where to focus efforts, and how to drive change



School System Roles



How Power Flows

- **Superintendent** reports to School Board
- **District Staff** report to Superintendent
- **Principals** report to Superintendent
- **Teachers** report to Principals
- **Student Groups** and **Student Advisory Council** report to Teachers
- **PTO, ELL** and **PAC** report to Principals
- **School Board** reports to Parents

Who's Who in Your School District?

School Board vs Superintendent

The School Board is typically an elected body that makes decisions regarding district policies, budgets, and overall direction.



The Superintendent is typically an appointed role (by the elected School Board) that oversees daily district operations and policy implementation.

Who's Who in Your School District?

Administrative Leaders vs Principals



Administrative leaders manage key departments like curriculum and student services (e.g. programs and support services that help students succeed like academic support, social and emotional support, and financial aid. They might have titles like: Director of Student Services, Special Education Coordinator, Department Chair or Guidance Counselor.

Principals are responsible for the management and functioning of individual schools. They implement district-level policies and make school-specific decisions.



Who's Who in Your School District?

Teachers vs Parent Groups

Teachers provide direct services to students and have valuable insights into classroom realities. Teachers can also help shape policies regarding working conditions and standards.



Parent groups, PTOs and PTAs are critical in building community engagement and often influence school policies by voicing parental concerns. Other groups in your school community that might play a similar role: school advisory councils, English Language Learner (ELL) parent groups and booster clubs.

Creating Your Relationship Map

- ✓ (1) The Superintendent answers to the School Board.
- ✓ (2) The Principal answers to the Superintendent.
- ✓ (3) Teachers answer to the Principal.
- ✓ (4) All of the above answer to Parents!



Other Examples of Power Mapping

Other resources that you can utilize for designing your power map

- ✓ Harvard Business School | [Power Mapping: What is it and how to use it](#)
- ✓ National Education Association | [Power Mapping 101](#)
- ✓ Union of Concerned Scientists | [Power Mapping Your Way to Success](#)



Actionable Steps for Using Your Power Map

- ✓ **Learn:** Each time you engage with a stakeholder, evaluate the interaction to see if it brought you closer to your goal.
- ✓ **Update:** Keep your power map up to date as you learn more about relationships and how decisions are made.
- ✓ **Adjust:** Adjust your approach based on what you've learned.



Conclusion

Building a Sustainable Parent Advocacy Network



By understanding your local school system and identifying who to talk to and when, you can make strategic decisions about how to pursue your goals.

Knowing who the decision-makers are, understanding their motivations, and finding the right partners in the community are all essential elements to making impactful changes in your school district.