

# PARENT EMPOWERMENT IN EDUCATION

Measuring What Matters

## Measuring What Matters

IMPORTANCE AND  
COMPLEXITY

INPUTS, OUTPUTS, &  
OUTCOMES

MEASURING  
INFRASTRUCTURE

SETTING TARGETS

LINKING TO STUDENT  
OUTCOMES

## INPUTS, OUTPUTS, & OUTCOMES

There are three core terms to begin our grounding in measurement:

### Inputs

Inputs are the measure of planned programmatic investment of people, time and money.

For example: The # hours of training community members on phone-banking would be an input; or the # hours of training teachers on how to engage parents during home visits would be an input; or the resources to develop a report or website with content for parents would be an input. This is particularly important to lay out in training and workshops to build the capacity of parents to understand their power, how to apply it to the system in which their children are educated, and how they can participate in and lead other organizing actions (individually or collectively).

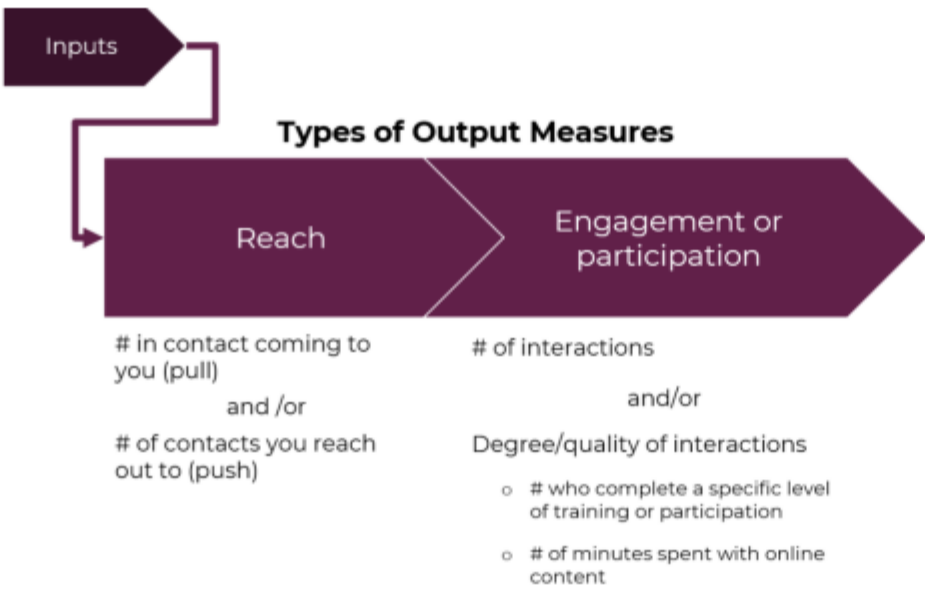
On this website, we will be focusing most on outputs and outcomes. However, **it is important for organizations to articulate inputs in order to assess how well scarce allocation of resources (investment) achieves intended outcomes (return).**

Inputs consistent of three things:

- Dosage**, which itself is determined by:
  - Duration:** Over what period of time?
  - Frequency:** How often within that time period?
  - Intensity:** When provide, for how long is a session?
- Format:**
  - Self-directed or in-person?
  - 1:1 or group format (and if group, max size)?
  - Location (where) and the timing/schedule (when)?
  - Amenities? (food, parking, child-care, etc.)
- Sequence:** (where applicable) How do different programs interact? In what order are they provided?

### Outputs

Outputs are measures of reach, or engagement/participation in your programming.



For example: The # of community members who complete X hours of training on phone-banking; or the # of teachers who complete X hours of training on home visits; or the # of individuals who are reached and engage with your website (the specifics of measurement on this are here ).

Some outputs involve the completion of a # of hours of participation in programming, which underscores the importance of laying out the dosage in the inputs, as this then determines how you quantify outputs (see the ACT Prep example below).

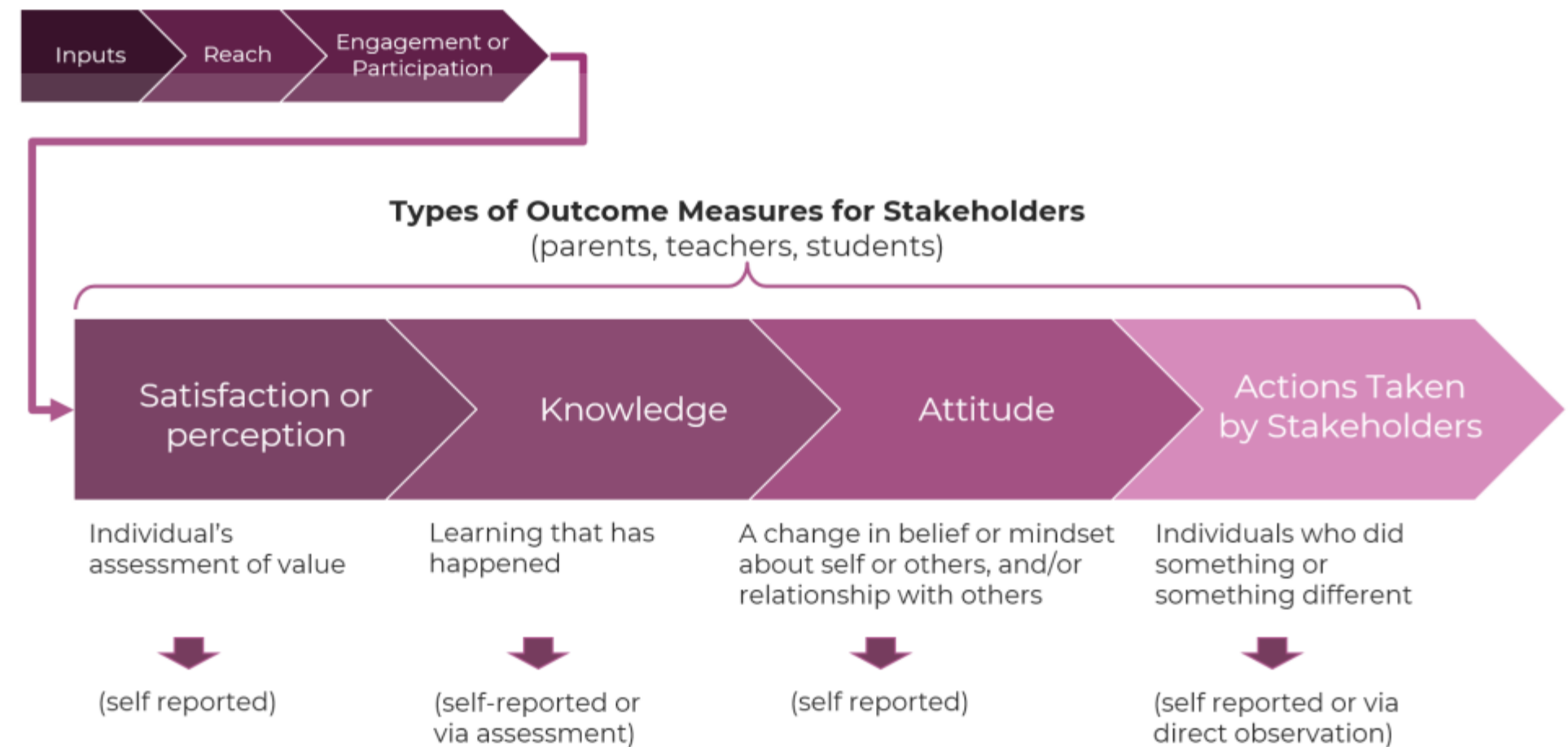
Outputs are not the same as outcomes, but they are important to measure because they let you know if you are more or less likely to achieve your desired outcomes.

However, they are not a substitute for outcomes.

### Outcomes

Outcomes are measures of value created by your programming.

There are a number of different types of outcomes an organization can measure to assess if it is creating value. In education, even if improving student outcomes (in all the complex and rich varieties these can be measured), are an organization's goal, there are a range of preceding outcomes that can be measured to help understand if an organization is on track (or off track) to positively impact these student outcomes.





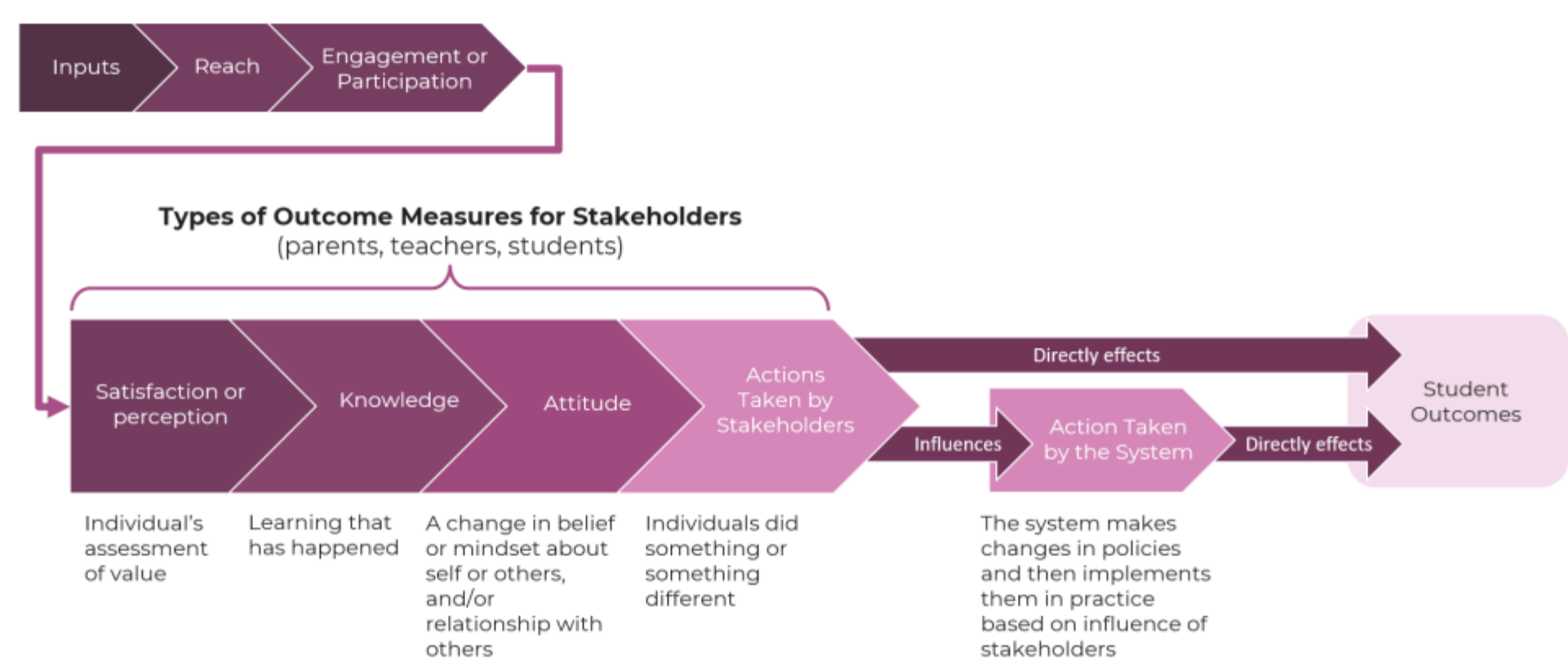
“Measuring satisfaction enables us to know if we and all of our stakeholders perceive the same existing reality.”

— Samantha Cohen, Senior Managing Director, Family and Community Engagement, Flamboyan Foundation

‘Satisfaction/perception’ can be the most immediate outcome to measure. It may not determine if ‘actions’ are then taken that impact student outcomes, but it gives an organization a starting point in terms of if what you are doing is being well received.. Alternatively, if there is very poor satisfaction with an organization’s programming, that is an immediate warning sign regarding if the more important follow-on outcomes can be met. “Measuring satisfaction enables us to know if we and all of our stakeholders perceive the same existing reality. It also lets you know very quickly if or programming is or is not working to meet the needs of our families,” advises Samantha Cohen, Senior Managing Director of Family and Community Engagement at the DC and Puerto Rico based Flamboyan Foundation.

In Parent Empowerment work, ‘Attitude’ can be important to measure in order to assess if individuals have made a shift in their belief about the innate power they hold, the potential for their child’s achievement, and/or their beliefs about what an educator or education system can and should be able to do for their child. Changing attitudes does not automatically mean a change in actions, but it can be a good predictor. **Asking a parent to reflect on their attitude can also be catalytic - it is asking them to judge if they believe they have power to make change happen for their child. When the answer is yes, it is both self-affirming and self-inspiring. When the answer is no, it is cause for both parents and organizations supporting them to reflect on what support is needed to change that perception of powerlessness to powerfullness.**

In campaigns to support parents exercising their power as partners in education or by voting with their choice, parents take direct action that - if succeeding in its intention - directly impacts student outcomes. However, in issue campaigns (voting with voice) and electoral campaigns (voting with vote), actions taken by parents are focused on making a change to the system. They have to succeed in achieving this change, and then ensuring the change gets effectively implemented, before measuring a change in student outcomes can even be considered. In the case of electoral campaigns, it requires changing who is in authority before then influencing the decisions they make. **In other words, taken together, all of this is complicated.** But we also believe that it is necessary to lay out in order to maximize impact by supporting planning, execution, learning, and attracting allies and resources.



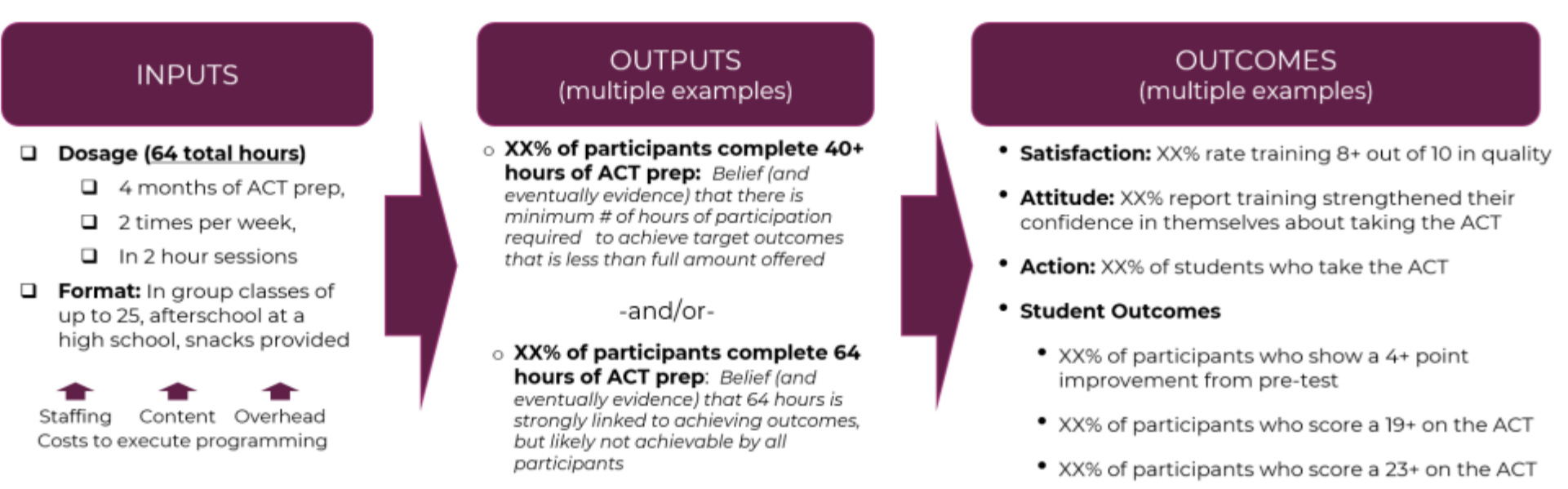
**Further, while outcome measures tend to move in this linear fashion, they by no means always do.** For example, an organization can begin by conducting a training, and could seek to measure satisfaction, knowledge, attitudes and then if parents in this training proceed to take action. But if one of those intended actions is a house meeting or research meeting, post THESE actions, the organization might again seek to measure changes in satisfaction, knowledge and attitudes... and potentially invest in seeing if those parents participating in a house meeting then grow in their activism by taking other actions - as participants or leaders.

**This does not mean everything should be measured.** Not everything you care about needs to be or should be formally measured. Not everything can be measured. And everything you measure incurs a cost. **An organization should only measure those pieces of data that would – if known and can be captured with reasonable effort – help an organization make decisions that maximizes its impact.**

### A Simple Example From The Supply Side

**Organizations lay out a 'wiring diagram' of measures that are tracked over time**, usually (but not always) in a clear linear progression, and that depend on success going from left to right (in English) to achieve impact. This also becomes an integral component of an organization’s articulation of their intended impact and theory of change or theory of action.

Here is an example of what it looks like to lay out inputs, outputs and outcomes in a direct-service education program – in this case, ACT Prep:



### A More Complex Example From Parent Empowerment

Below is a hypothetical sequence of measures from a Strategy 3 ‘Vote with Collective Voice’ Issue Campaign. **Not surprisingly, the 'wiring diagram' can get much more complex very quickly for parent empowerment work**, in linking from inputs to outputs to a multiple steps of outcomes that ultimately arrive at student outcomes.



**NOTE - NEED TO DECIDE IF THIS BECOMES AN INTERACTIVE GRAPHIC OR JUST KEEP STATIC AS A SCROLL BELOW, WITH CLEANUP OF FORMATTING OF THE IMAGES BELOW**



Input for a parent leadership training

- Dosage: 30 hours of training
  - Duration - 10 weeks
  - Frequency - 1 session per week
  - Intensity - 3 hours per session
- Format:
  - Group training of up 20 emerging parent leaders
  - Dinner, parking and child-care provided



Outputs from parent leadership training

- X# of participants who complete XX% of hours of programming and complete key training milestones
  - Completion of story of self
  - Completion of mapping network capital



Initial outcomes

- **Satisfaction:** X% who report being satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of the programming
- **Knowledge:** X% who report understanding who holds what authority in a school system
- **Attitude:**
  - X% who report believing this organization is a trusted source of information and counsel
  - X% who report believing they have and can use their power to advocate for their child
  - X% who report believing they have and can use their power as a community to drive change



Outcomes from a full campaign of actions

- A **sample range of actions** parents and an organization may employ to influence those in authority to achieve their impact agenda
- X# of parents who **provide public testimony** at a school board meeting
  - X# of **social media posts** made by parents advancing campaign
  - X# of people who **attend a public action**
    - X# of parents who organized and led this public action
    - X# of media hits from this pubic action
  - X# of people reached through **canvassing**;
    - X# of parents who participated in canvassing
    - X# of parents who organized and led canvassing



Outcomes – campaign success

- A vote by those in authority (such as a school board) to support this parent organization's impact agenda  
And/or
- A decision to change policy by an individual in authority (such as a Principal or Superintendent)



Outcomes – implementation of change

- Did change in policy result in changes in conditions at the school or district level **to enable changes to be implemented**?
  - Policies/regulations written?
  - Changes in funding?
  - Changes in staffing?
  - Changes in training?
  - Changes in measurement and accountability?
- **Is change actually happening as intended** in schools, classrooms and in the experiences of students?



Outcomes – adoption of change

- Do **parents know about and are they able to capitalize on the changes** in policy that have been effectively implemented?
- What **campaign of informing, training and supporting is required** to ensure widespread adoption?



Outcomes – change in student outcomes

- Potentially over multiple timeframes: Short-term intermediate, long-term
- Potentially wide range of student outcomes: attendance, culture, behavior, academic achievement (GPA, testing), SEL/character, skill development, academic attainment (high school graduation, college going)

**Inputs:** This **example starts with a leadership training**, with the following dosage and details on the format that collectively drive the allocation of people, time and money. It is also designed with the needs of parents in mind to remove barriers to participation, such as providing child-care, dinner and parking.

Many parent empowerment actions start with workshops, trainings or other events, and continue to have these to reach parents, engage them, help them understand their innate power, help them set an agenda, and then ultimately take actions (individually or collectively) for their children, schools, or school systems.

**Outputs:** In this example, the primary output is the number of parents who completed the training. This could further be refined to be the number who complete 100% of the training sessions, or it may be that this organization has a lower threshold of participation than 100% to qualify for completion – maybe 80% of all sessions.

Also included in this example are the completion of key deliverables as part of this training – a ‘story of self’ and ‘mapping network capital.’

**Initial Outcomes – Satisfaction, Knowledge, Attitude:** The first outcomes an organization might measure are around satisfaction, knowledge and/or changes in attitude. While these measures are not the ultimate outcomes an organization is likely looking to impact, they can be valuable as leading indicators that this training is contributing to a trajectory of accomplishing larger outcomes. They can also be important measures when larger outcomes are much longer-term and/or may be harder to capture and measure.

However, not all organizations will want to invest in the time and effort to capture these early outcomes (collecting any measures means expending resources).

**Outcomes – Actions:** Any given campaign can employ a range of different actions, and therefore requires an infrastructure of parent power to execute them (link to infrastructure). In this example, this organization would measure actions around public testimony, social media, a large public action, and actions around canvassing (again, these are only a sample of potential actions). Some of these measure direct actions by parents, while others are measures of larger participation by other people in the community because of parent actions.

Also, in the case of an action like canvassing, it can be important to measure how many parents can organize and lead, and how many participate as members. Both roles are crucial but different, and both are measures of the infrastructure of parent power that enable that action to happen. Again, this is a simple sample of actions and a very simple subset of the measures by action an organization can chose to employ in planning, execution and learning.

**Outcome – Campaign Win:** This may seem like a simple binary outcome – did a ‘vote with voice’ issue campaign influence those in authority to make the desired change? However, it may not always be so simple. First, a campaign may not win initially, in which case it may continue, pause to regroup, or stop and decide to switch to a different impact agenda. There may be formal mechanisms to appeal. Further, the individuals in authority (elected or appointed) can change, and decisions can be reversed, which speaks to the importance of an organization building an infrastructure of parent power that is active and enduring between and across campaigns of all types.

**Outcomes – Implementation:** Winning a campaign is not the same as ensuring implementation that results in the intended changes in school or district actions to achieve the desired outcomes for students. Changing large systems is hard. Unforeseen challenges to actually implementing change can arise. So can passive and active opposition from within the system.

Often, winning a ‘vote with voice’ collective issue campaign requires a follow-on campaign to ensure and support support implementation. This also again speaks to the importance of building and sustaining (and measuring) an enduring infrastructure of parent power.

Hopefully, with the hard work and effort of many, a campaign win translates into conditions for implementation, and the fought for change then effectively reaches into schools, classrooms, and the experiences of students.

**Outcomes - Adoption:** Even when a change is effectively implemented by the system, an additional campaign may be required to ensure uptake by parents and others. When new resources are provided by the system - such as advising support, or a unified enrollment system, or even whole new school options - parents in the system may not be able to immediately capitalize on these changes to benefit their children without first an additional campaign of informing, training and supporting individuals.

**Outcomes – Student Outcomes:** Last and definitely not least, did all this hard work of informed, organized parents exercising their power, result in performance changes for children?

An organization can focus on measuring short-term outcomes most immediately assessed as a result of implementing change, and can also choose to measure a broad set of student outcomes over a longer timeframe.

There are also multiple ways for an organization to link their parent empowerment work to student outcomes. For more details on that, please click here.