

Strategy Exercise

Local

The Campaign to Restore Bus Service to St. Finbar Magnet Schools

Overview Participants practice creating a strategy chart for an issue advocacy campaign using a hypothetical scenario involving a local school district.

Time Total: 30 minutes

- Exercise: 20 minutes
- Debrief: 10 minutes

Background

St. Finbar is a fictitious city in the U.S. The school system, including charter schools, serves 135,000 students distributed between 119 elementary schools, 24 middle schools and 30 high schools. The annual school budget is \$1.2 billion, which was inadequate before the economic downturn and has typically become less adequate as costs have risen. At the same time income from taxes has declined. The students are majority non-White. Latinos make up 44% of the student population, followed by non-Hispanic White students at 25%, African Americans at 13% and the remaining 15% are largely Asian.

The Problem

The school board has announced, in a moment of ill-advised budgeting frenzy that to save \$10 million dollars, school bus service for all 25 magnet schools will be eliminated starting in September. The Board's vote was unanimous. It is now February. The absence of bus service will be a major blow to your school as 57% of the students now ride the bus and many families can't afford to bring their children to school by other means.

The School Board, which has final decision-making power over the budget, consists of five members who are elected to four year terms on a staggered basis. The at-large school board election takes place at the same time as the City Council election. While almost 800,000 (54%) voted in the last City Council election, only 500,000 of those voted in the school board race (lower down on the ballot).

Your Organization

You are members of the PTA at the Linguistic Institute, an elementary magnet school devoted to graduating truly bi-lingual students. Your school has over 800 students. Slightly more than half of them qualify for free or reduced-cost lunches, indicating that the school has diversity of income as well as race. The Institute is known as a 100% magnet, meaning that none of the students attend because it is their local school. All are in the magnet program.

Your PTA has 4 officers and 5 board members plus a class parent in each class. Usually not more than 30 people show up for PTA meetings but since the bus cuts were announced, over one hundred people, have been coming.

The School Board

Name	Notes
<p>Hubert Gonzalez</p> <p>Won Last Election By 72%</p> <p>Running in Next Election: Yes</p>	<p>Mr. Gonzalez has a background as a community organizer, working to revitalize low-income neighborhoods and creating networks for parents of pre-school aged children. He served five years as president of the Relational Organizing Institute and has also worked for the Local Efforts Support Corporation, the Vomer science and Education Foundation and as a consultant for the Washington Heights Community Development Corporation. In the field of labor relations, he has served as St. Finbar regional organizer for both the United Domestic Workers and United Healthcare Workers. Mr. Gonzalez serves as a board member of the St. Finbar Cooperative Charter School,</p>
<p>Jack Gotham</p> <p>Won Last Election by 54%</p> <p>Running in Next Election: No</p>	<p>Jack Gotham, Ph.D., was elected to the Board in 2008. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at Sitzer College and a Masters in Psychology and Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at U.S. National University.</p> <p>Once in St. Finbar Dr. Gotham taught Spanish at a language institute where he later became director. Dr. Gotham is currently a clinical psychologist in private practice, working with children, adolescents and adults. As a parent, Dr. Gotham has been a member of the Larson Elementary School Site Council, a classroom and PTA volunteer at Sprack Elementary. He and his wife live in Multiversity City, a subdivision of St. Finbar. Their three grown children all attended St. Finbar Unified schools.</p>

Name	Notes
<p>Eldridge Knowles</p> <p>Won Last Election By 59%.</p> <p>Running in Next Election: Yes</p>	<p>Eldridge Knowles was first elected directly from the classroom to the Board to represent District C in 1990. He served as Board President and Vice President during his first term. Reelected in 1994, 1998, 2002, and 2006, he has been an active delegate to both the St. Finbar County School Boards Association and the State School Boards Association. On the national level, Mr. Knowles has served as the Board's representative on the Council of Great City Schools. Mr. Knowles attended St. Finbar City Schools in Point Loma and he received his bachelor's and master's degrees in business from St. Finbar State University. He has taught for more than 36 years. He also served as a counselor, resource teacher and curriculum administrator, and he taught business at St. Finbar City College for 10 years.</p>
<p>Carol Johnson</p> <p>Won Last Election By: 80%</p> <p>Running in Next Election: No.</p>	<p>Carol Johnson was elected to the Board of Education in November 2004 and re-elected to her seat in November 2008.</p> <p>Ms. Johnson was born and raised in Smithfield, North Carolina, and graduated from Smithfield-Selma Senior High School. After graduation, she joined the U.S. Navy and served for 21 years. During her career in the Navy she rose to the rank of Senior Chief, and managed Navy Health clinics. During her military career, Ms. Johnson earned a Bachelor of Health Science from George Washington University. After her retirement from active duty in 1995, Ms. Johnson moved to St. Finbar to begin her second career in public education. From 1995 to 2003, Ms. Johnson taught at Bay Park Elementary School and served on various school and neighborhood committees.</p>
<p>Linda Nagashima</p> <p>Won Last Election By: 60%</p> <p>Running in Next Election: Yes</p>	<p>Linda Nagashima was elected to the Board in 2002 and 2006. She holds a bachelor's degree in Linguistics and English Literature, as well as a certificate in applied Linguistics for teaching English as a Second Language. She received her law degree from the University of St. Finbar, where she worked as a member of the administration. She served as Vice Chair of the Union of Pan Asian Communities, as well as serving on boards of other community organizations. She and her husband, Kotaro Nagashima, have two sons, one who attends school in the St. Finbar Unified School District. They have lived in the city for 25 years.</p>

Assignment

Time: 20 minutes

From the above list of elected officials, choose one to be the initial decision maker whose support you will first attempt to win and whom you think can persuade others to get on board. Be prepared to justify your choice. Make a strategy chart on easel paper, one column to a sheet. The chart should show how you intend to put pressure on the decision maker you have chosen. When you are finished with the Tactics column, number the tactics in the order in which you will use them. Choose someone to report to the whole group.

You can make up any additional information you need as long as it is both possible and probable.

Coalition Exercise

Local

Forming The St. Finbar Education Coalition

Overview Participants practice evaluating possible coalition partners to work together on a local issue.

Time Total: 30 minutes

- Exercise: 20 minutes
- Debrief: 10 minutes

Background

In the campaign to get the bus service restored to all magnet schools in the district the Linguistic Institute PTA has decided that it must involve other organizations to build enough power to be successful. School Board Member Hubert Gonzalez has agreed to introduce the proposal. You are the leaders of the PTA, and have decided to form the St. Finbar Education Coalition. You are considering asking the following groups to join:

1. The Greater St. Finbar Small Business and Manufacturers Association.
2. St. Finbar chapter of the State Senior Citizen Federation.
3. St. Finbar Interfaith Committee.
4. The St. Finbar branch of the NAACP.

Coalition Exercise

Local

Assignment

You have 20 minutes to answer the questions below. From the perspective of the newly formed St. Finbar Education Coalition, consider why the group that you have been assigned (one of the four above) would want to be a part of the coalition, and the resources and liabilities they would bring to the coalition. Choose one person to record the answers on easel paper and present them to the larger group.

1. Why would the organization be interested in joining the St. Finbar Education Coalition?
2. What might prevent the organization from joining the Coalition?
3. What resources could the organization bring to the Coalition?
4. What liabilities might the organization bring to the Coalition?
5. Who would you contact? Who from the PTA should make the contact?

NOTE: Do not role play the planning meeting. Answer the questions from the perspective of the Linguistics Institute PTA.

Media Exercise

Local

Media And The Campaign To Restore Bus Service To St. Finbar Magnet Schools

Overview Participants practice focusing their message in the face of questions from the media.

Time Total: 30 minutes

- Exercise: 20 minutes
- Debrief: 10 minutes

Background

Everyone will use the same scenario below, but each person will be assigned to do EITHER Exercise 1 OR Exercise 2. Everyone will have fifteen minutes to prepare, and then we will begin the interviews!

You are a leader of the PTA at the Linguistic Academy in St. Finbar, working to save the busing program for magnet schools. Your PTA unit and others brought a large group of parents to the School Board meeting, and a number of them were able to give testimony about how their children would be impacted if the busing were eliminated. The School Board just ended their meeting without making any decision. The Board members are clearly nervous about so many parents showing up, but they keep saying there just is not enough money. They postponed the decision for one month.

Media Exercise

Local

Assignment

EXERCISE 1

As you leave the School Board meeting, a reporter thrusts a microphone at you and asks for a comment.

What will you say? What is the main point you want to make? How will you respond to questions? Remember that your time with the reporter is likely to be very brief! If you appear on the evening news program, it is not likely to be more than a 15-second clip.

EXERCISE 2

The morning after the School Board meeting, you and three or four other parents are on a public affairs talk show on the local public radio station.

The President of the School Board was on just before you, and he said that there simply is not enough money. What will you say? What are your main points? How will you handle questions? Your segment on the show will last ten minutes.

Meetings Exercise

Local

The St. Finbar Education Coalition Meets With Linda Nagashima

Overview Participants practice winning the support of an elected official.

Time Total: 30 minutes

- Exercise: 20 minutes
- Debrief: 10 minutes

The St Finbar Education Coalition has been conducting a campaign to reverse the decision to cut bus transportation to all magnet schools in the district. After meeting with individual school board members you have determined that Hubert Gonzalez is in favor of reversing the decision to cut the bus service and is willing to make the proposal to the School Board. At this point two board members are opposed and two are undecided.

Linda Nagashima is undecided. She has agreed to meet with a delegation from the St. Finbar Education Coalition to discuss the issue. Nagashima is very concerned about her next race, which is in November.

Position Of St Finbar Members On Reinstating Bus Service

	School Board Member	Position
1	Hubert Gonzalez	In Favor
2	Jack Gotham	Opposed
3	Eldridge Knowles	Undecided
4	Carol Johnson	Opposed
5	Linda Nagashima	Undecided

Assignment

You have 20 minutes to plan your meeting with School Board Member Linda Nagashima who has agreed to meet at the School District office in one week. Determine whom you will send from the coalition and who will be the spokespeople at the meeting. What power do you have over Ms. Nagashima?

After planning, you will have a mock meeting with Board Member Nagashima in which you must convince her that she has more to gain by supporting the proposal than opposing it.

You may make up whatever information you need but keep it within the realm of the possible.

Notes