



# Power Points

To assist educational leaders addressing audiences  
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## Operation Education

**Key Message: Public understanding and engagement is foundational to achieving the best possible educational outcomes.**

Minnesota's public schools are good—very good—but global competition and a struggling economy require that they be even better—great. In order to make that happen, a shared vision for kids and their futures needs to be cultivated and supported beyond the walls of school buildings—in communities, homes, places of worship, businesses and government—everywhere that people are impacted by the outcomes of public education.

**Why** is it so important that you become engaged in public education?

- **Quality Public Schools – A Collective Responsibility**<sup>1</sup>

The quality of America's public schools has a direct impact on each and every one of us. Whether we are parents, neighbors, business owners, or homeowners or educators, our futures depend to some degree on the future of public schools.

  - ◆ **Nine in 10 U.S. students attend public schools.** Each school day, 49.6 million students spend their time inside America's 98,905 public schools. The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) identifies public engagement as one of four criteria for schools of excellence.
  - ◆ **Public schools are the center of communities.** Public schools are inextricably linked to the communities they serve and are among the few remaining centers of civic and social life. Home values, crime rates and local economies have all been linked to the quality of local public schools.
  - ◆ **Public schools are the foundation of our democracy.** Democracy's strength depends upon people's ability to understand and participate in decisions that affect them. Public education supports democracy by giving all children access to high-quality education. It is a collective responsibility that requires the ongoing engagement and support of the American public.
  - ◆ **Parent involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement.**<sup>2</sup>
  - ◆ **Family and community involvement in education is an essential element in achieving world-class schools and a world class state.** Minnesota's Promise<sup>3</sup> identifies school, district, and state level opportunities to strengthen relationships and increase parent and community knowledge and understanding about schools.
- **Greater life success for learners**
  - ◆ The impact of parent involvement on student outcomes including attitude toward school or subject areas, self-concept, classroom behavior, time spent on homework, expectations for one's future, absenteeism, motivation, and retention appears to be both strong and positive.<sup>2</sup>
  - ◆ *The SEARCH Institute*<sup>4</sup>, a global research leader, lists 40 Developmental Assets that help young people grow up healthy, caring and responsible. Most of those assets involve the engagement of families, communities, neighborhoods and schools. The Search Institute conducted a four-year study on the relationship between the developmental assets and educational achievement and found a significant relationship between developmental assets and student grades.
  - ◆ *The Children, Youth and Families Consortium* at the University of Minnesota<sup>5</sup> has found that positive experiences of children and families in communities strengthen kids' opportunities to develop and succeed. When communities and the institutions within them view child, youth and family

development as a paramount concern to the well-being of the communities overall, everyone benefits.

- ◆ *A Broader, BOLDER, Approach to Education*<sup>6</sup>, a national task force of public policy experts from fields including education, social welfare, health, housing and civil rights contends that community support systems must work together to effectively narrow the achievement gap that exists in America and threatens our best possible future.

➤ **A More Prosperous future for everyone**

- ◆ Public schools are charged with providing the next generation of taxpayers, voters, employees, business leaders, parents and more with the solid foundation of skills and knowledge they need to succeed in work and life.
- ◆ When our shared investment in public services goes up so does our prosperity. Minnesota's national ranking on key performance indicators, including prosperity, educational achievement and quality of life has declined in recent years at the same time that the state has decreased its public investment relative to other states<sup>7</sup>.
- ◆ The best way for state and local governments to promote economic development is to use their limited resources on developing their public goods and, in particular, their communities' human capital, which is their workforce.<sup>8</sup>

**How** can we engage with one another to make our schools and our system of public education even more successful in preparing learners and creating a more prosperous future?

- **Parents** are children's earliest and most significant teachers. They need to be interested, informed and prepared for child and school engagement.
- **Families and communities** can provide students with positive and persistent direction on their paths through school, and connect what students do inside the classroom to learning that takes place beyond school walls.<sup>3</sup>
- **Businesses and other employers** can share the most current and detailed understanding of the world of work that K-12 educators are ultimately prepared students to enter and achieve in.<sup>3</sup>
- **Businesses, nonprofit organizations, and volunteers** have indispensable roles to play. Caring adults who do not work in schools must step in as mentors, motivators, and models of what is possible.<sup>9</sup>
- **You.** We want your [stakeholder] ideas about what we can do, without diverting essential funds from teaching and learning, to get you and others more involved in communication, planning, and volunteer opportunities within our communities. Our schools are in fact a collaboration in which everyone shares in the responsibilities for and the benefits of providing our kids with the best possible education. We want and need to accomplish the following:
  - ◆ Collect and share multiple and different points of view
  - ◆ Engage people willing to advocate for kids and schools
  - ◆ Build meaningful new partnerships that will promote successful schools
  - ◆ Provide reliable and nonpartisan information about schools
  - ◆ Expand public understanding of the "big picture" within which our schools exist
  - ◆ Collectively explore the relationship between legislation and the capacity of our schools

The evidence abounds that when kids grow up within families and communities that are engaged and connected with schools, the likelihood of school—and life—success increases. We welcome your interest and we need your participation. As writer, philosopher Sam Levenson once wrote.

*"Each newborn child arrives on earth with a message to deliver to mankind. Clenched in his little fist is some particle of yet unrevealed truth, some missing clue, which may solve the enigma of man's destiny. He has a limited amount of time to fulfill his mission and he will never get a second chance -- nor will we. He may be our last hope. He must be treated as top sacred."* – Sam Levenson, *Everything But Money*, 1966

## Presentation Support Materials

*These materials are prepared for InvestMN (previously Champions for Children™) as a collaborative public relations effort of MASA, MASSP, and MESPA. The materials are intended to assist you in communicating with and presenting to the stakeholders in your community and beyond. They are only as useful as you make them.*

*If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Shari Prest, Ark Associates at 952-469-5953 or [sprest@arkassoc.com](mailto:sprest@arkassoc.com)*

### **Public Engagement Tips:**

Some of the ways we can to advance this commitment to public engagement follow: <sup>10</sup> **Listen** through a variety of ways that may include interviews, focus groups, research, and formal and informal meetings.

- ◆ **Respond** to main concerns
- ◆ **Engage** people who have not been actively engaged in the past
- ◆ **Frame issues** in a way that is understandable to all stakeholders
- ◆ **Provide information** in nonpartisan, accurate, and manageable ways
- ◆ **Identify the consequences** and trade-offs involved with various responses to issues
- ◆ **Build common ground** by taking time to understand and analyze issues and opportunities
- ◆ **Create a variety of opportunities** for discussion
- ◆ **Respond respectfully and thoughtfully** to one another's thoughts and concerns
- ◆ **Build long-term capacity** for building consensus and problem-solving capacity in the future

### **Communication Tips:**

- ◆ Have a clear and shared vision
- ◆ Lead don't push
- ◆ Know your stakeholders and their interests
- ◆ Anticipate change and conflict
- ◆ Use commonly understood language
- ◆ Keep moving forward

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### **Source citations:**

- 1 *Give Kids Good Schools: A Case for Public Engagement in Public Schools*, Give Kids Good Schools.org
- 2 *Parent Involvement in Education, Close-Up # 6*, Northwest Educational Laboratory (NWREL)
- 3 *Minnesota's Promise, World-Class Schools, World-Class State*, January, 2008\
- 4 The Search Institute, *40 Developmental Assets*, Search-Institute.org
- 5 *Consortium Connection*, The Children, Youth and Families Consortium, University of Minnesota, *Volume 16, Number 2*, Fall 2007
- 6 A Broader BOLDER Approach to Education, [www.boldapproach.org](http://www.boldapproach.org)
- 7 Minnesota 20/20, September 2008
- 8 Art Rolnick, Director of Research for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis
- 9 *The Bridge to Higher Learning, A new Vision for Minnesota's High Schools in the Global Information Age*, June 2007, Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals
- 10 *Public Engagement: A Primer from Public Agenda*, No 01/2008