

Labor-Management-Community Collaboration in Springfield Public Schools

5.9.2012



Geoff Marietta

Harvard Graduate School of Education

Overview

- Why collaboration?
- The Springfield story
- Policy context
- Methods
- Lessons learned

Collaboration is hard

Different organizational goals, culture, procedures, and language create barriers to success (Huxham & Vangen, 2001).



People favor the groups to which they belong and discriminate against outsiders – even when randomly assigned (Tajfel, 1981; Smith & Henry, 1996).

Member favoritism and misunderstanding of out-group members increases conflict and inhibits collaboration

The Springfield Story

2003: Joins Rennie Center *Labor-Management Initiative*.

2006: *Definition of a Successful School* completed

2008: Ingram appoints Collins and deProse to the Instructional Leadership Team.

2011: Collaboration Schools implement SCC reforms.

Burke Era 2001-2008

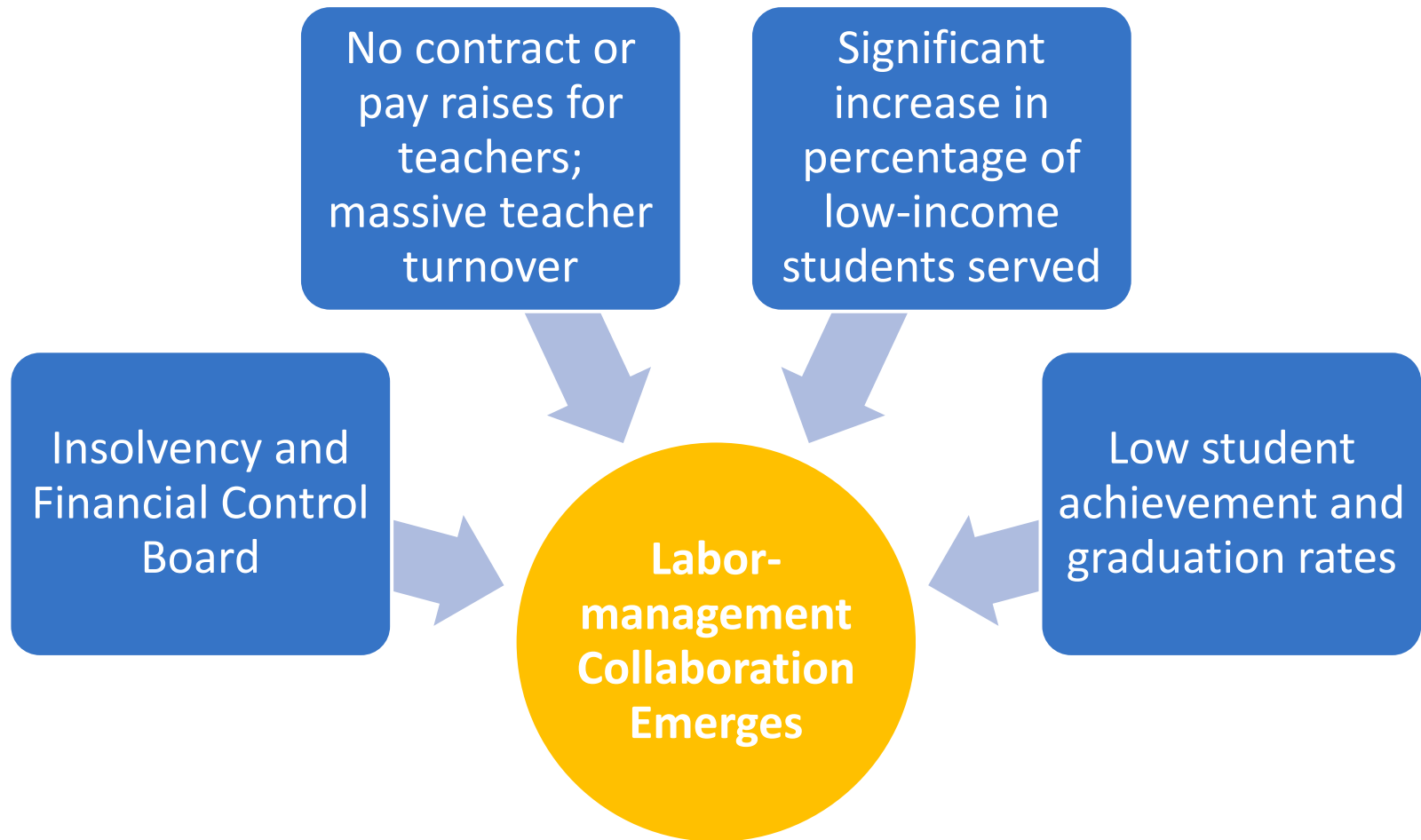
Ingram Era 2008-2012

2004: Financial Control Board in place; Burke and Collins launch *Joint Labor-Management Initiative*

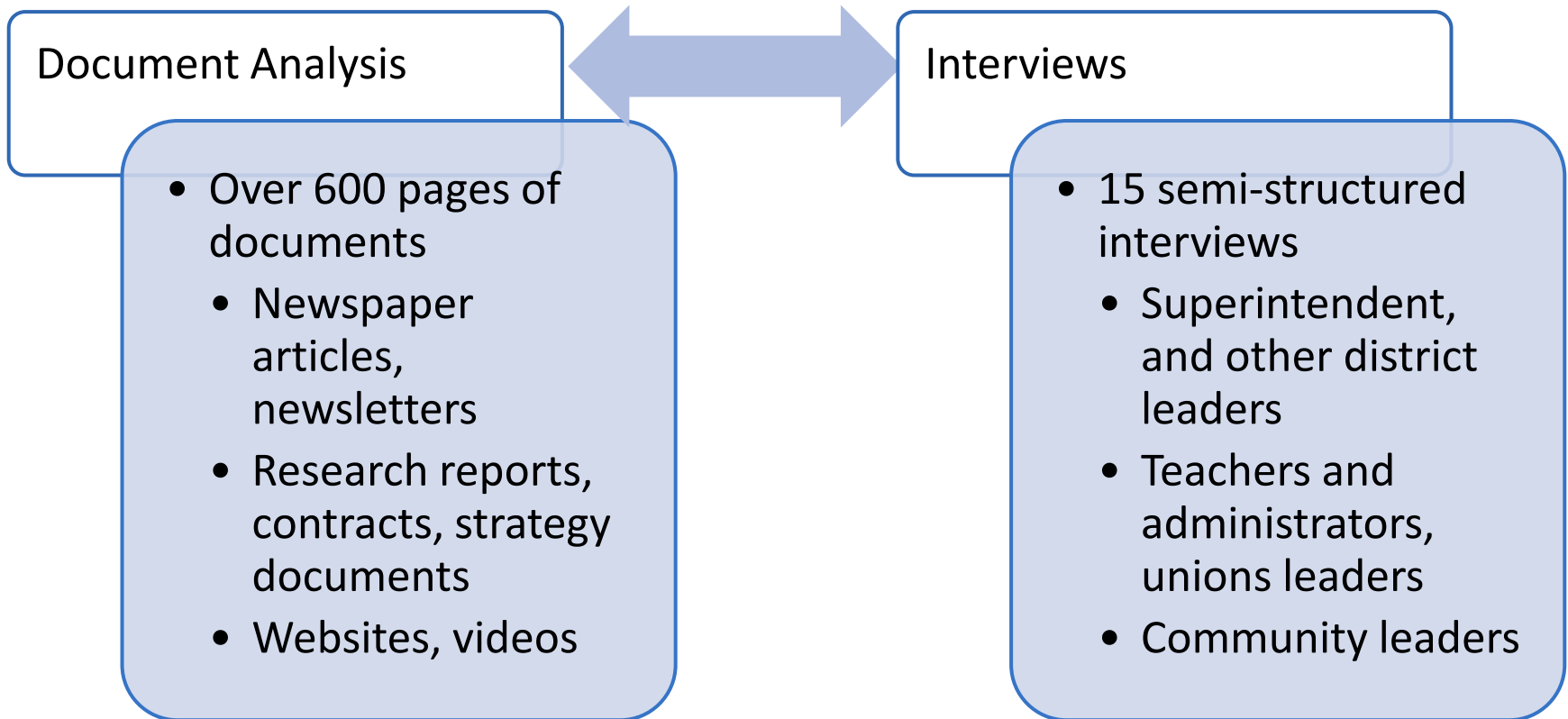
2007: *Definition of a Successful School* released. *KEYS* survey launched.

2010: *Springfield Collaboration for Change (SCC)* launched. Level 4 Schools announced.

Collaboration emerges from chaos



Case study methods



Five Lessons Learned

- ▣ **Lesson 1:** Use data to maintain focus and drive action plans that center on student needs.
- ▣ **Lesson 2:** Expect unexpected disruptions to collaboration, and do not give up when they occur.
- ▣ **Lesson 3:** Build collaborative structures that extend beyond the superintendent's office.
- ▣ **Lesson 4:** Rely on third-party facilitators to keep conversations productive, and maintain momentum.
- ▣ **Lesson 5:** Involve community leaders in district leadership teams.

Definition of a Successful School

“A successful school provides a broad, comprehensive education to all students. The school aims at high academic achievement for all students and shows a pattern of steadily improving all students’ academic performance....”

Lesson 1: Use data to maintain focus and drive action plans

KEYS Survey

- Do public schools in Springfield have the characteristics of a successful school?
- 80% of teachers and administrators complete survey

Major Findings

- Inconsistent expectations for student learning
- Concerns about unsafe learning environments
- Lack of opportunities for shared decision-making

Lesson 2: Expect unexpected disruptions

“You have to be willing to disagree with each other without being disagreeable.” - Collins

Challenges

- **New superintendent of Springfield Public Schools**
- **Interest-based Bargaining (IBB) Challenges**
- **20% of Springfield Public Schools designated Level 4**

Lesson 3: Build collaborative structures and relationships

Leadership
turnover
threatened
collaboration

Collaboration
through
standing
committees

Committee
members
respond to
new issues

Lesson 4: Rely on third-party facilitators

- ❑ Encourage leaders to build their dialogue on common ground
- ❑ Hold leaders accountable to keep moving forward with the collaboration
- ❑ Serve as an outlet when conversations break down
- ❑ Inform new stakeholders of the work
- ❑ Hold periodic “reset” meetings

Lesson 5: Invite community organizations to lead on-the-ground efforts

“Real education reforms are developed by the community with buy-in.” - Ingram

Springfield Collaboration for Change (SCC)

- \$1.25 million 5-year grant from the NEA Foundation
- SCC Leadership Team with district, union and community leaders
- Provided school-based support coaches, and parent-teacher home visits to reach families
- Four “Collaboration Schools” accepted to participate, impact emerging

Thank You!

For additional information, email:
cdentremont@renniecenter.org

For updates on Rennie Center research
and events, follow us on twitter:
[@therenniececenter](https://twitter.com/therenniececenter)

Copyright

All information in this presentation is from a copyrighted Rennie Center publication.

Suggested Citation:

Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy. (Spring 2012). *Labor-Management-Community Collaboration in Springfield Public Schools*. Cambridge, MA: Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy.

About the Rennie Center

The Rennie Center's mission is to develop a public agenda that informs and promotes significant improvement of public education in Massachusetts. Our work is motivated by a vision of an education system that creates the opportunity to educate every child to be successful in life, citizenship, employment and life-long learning. Applying nonpartisan, independent research, journalism and civic engagement, the Rennie Center is creating a civil space to foster thoughtful public discourse to inform and shape effective policy. For more information, please visit www.renniecenter.org.