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A Strategic Power Map for Scaling Up Green Schools

Abstract: This document lays the groundwork for community groups to build a strategy to scale up a Philadelphia Green Schools program. It provides background information on two relevant issues that are relevant to building out this program: the Green Cities, Clean Water plan and public education reform. It also lays out a power map of key stakeholders and decision makers who are either already engaged in greening school yards or who could be important allies in the future. It ends with two recommendations for building coalitions. This document is not an extensive strategic plan, but rather could help shape future organizing.

Vision Statement: In fifteen years, by 2030, Philadelphia will have a world-renowned Green Schools program that incorporates green infrastructure in all Philadelphia Public Schools with a place-based curriculum that builds off that infrastructure.

Campaign Goals: This program will make concrete improvements in the lives of Philadelphia residents and youth by:

- Improving public health through air quality and water quality with green schoolyards (cleans up air, water and gives youth spaces for outdoor activity).
- Increasing access to economic opportunities by providing youth with skills and experiences they need to enter the workforce.
- Increasing community capacity by building local, neighborhood networks.
- Restoring natural hydrology of the region, thereby improving water quality and reducing climate risks.

“Lay of the Land”: Context and History

Green City, Clean Waters

In 2011, the US EPA and PA DEP ordered the City of Philadelphia to create a Long Term Control Plan to reduce the amount of pollution being released through Combined Sewer Overflows. Due to several factors, including budgetary constraints that made typical grey infrastructure unfeasible for addressing this problem, the City decided to adopt a revolutionary plan to reach their commitment through a widespread network of green infrastructure. The City of Philadelphia launched a Green City, Clean Water plan to green 34% of its impervious surfaces over the next 25 years. Installing GI on publicly held land including schoolyards have become a critical part of achieving these goals, in part because they make up 1,000 acres of impervious surface¹.

Public Education Reform

In 2001, in response to budgetary issues and years of low-achievement and performance, the state of Pennsylvania took control of the School District of Philadelphia². The state

¹ Philadelphia Water Department, “Green City, Clean Water: The City of Philadelphia’s Program for Combined Sewer Overflow Control Program Summary,” 2011; The City of Philadelphia Water Department Investor Conference Presentation 2013.

² Jacques Steinberg, “In Largest Schools Takeover, State Will Run Philadelphia’s,” *New York Times*,

disbanded the school board and installed a School Reform Commission (SRC), which is a 5-member commission (3 appointed by the Governor of PA and 2 appointed by Mayor of Philadelphia). The SRC is responsible for setting the strategic direction and hiring of the Superintendent of the School District.

One of the main changes they made was to implement a “diverse provider” model, where low performing schools get turned over to private management through Charter Schools. While students and parents have more choices now, the privatization of public education has been unpopular among many people in Philadelphia. Today the School District controls 214 public schools with 131,362 students. There are an additional 86 Charter Schools with 60,774 students across Philadelphia.

Green Schoolyards

In 2015, eight schools had already completed construction on their green schoolyards, 12 schools were in the design process while five were in the planning stages. These transformations happened thru several channels: either by the Philadelphia Water Department Capital Project, School District of Philadelphia Capital Project or 3rd Party Project in which a third party designed and constructed the yard³.

In October 2015, Mayor Nutter announced an expansion of the city’s Green2015 that will add another 20 schools to be greened in the next 5 years. This expansion is a partnership between the Parks and Recreation Department, the School District, the Trust for Public Land, and the Water Department. However, this plan will require the School Reform Commission to approve a \$5 million capital-funding plan. This points to both the power of partnerships and joint funding⁴.

Dec. 22, 2001, accessed Nov. 27th, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/22/us/in-largest-schools-takeover-state-will-run-philadelphia-s.html?pagewanted=prin>

³ Maryse Beliveau-Nance, “What a difference a green schoolyard can make,” *Philly.com*, May 4th, 2015 accessed Nov. 27th, 2015. http://www.philly.com/philly/opinion/20150504_What_a_difference_a_green_schoolyard_can_make.html

⁴ City of Philadelphia, “Mayor Nutter Announces Expansion of Green Schoolyard Initiative,” Oct. 19th, 2015 accessed Nov. 27th, 2015. <https://cityofphiladelphia.wordpress.com/2015/10/19/mayor-nutter-announces-expansion-of-green-schoolyard-initiative/>

Power Map: Key Stakeholders and Decision-Makers

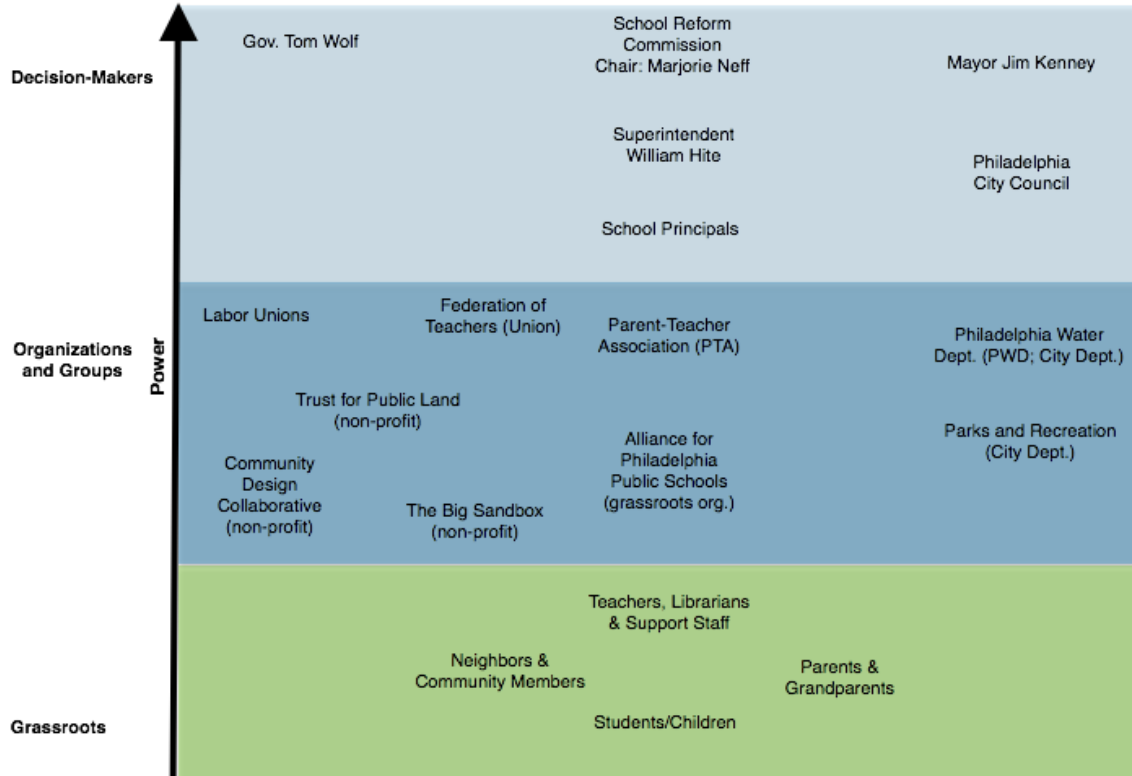


Figure 1. Representation of key stakeholders in relationship to the power they have over implementing a school district wide Green Schools program.

Grassroots:

Grassroots power emerges when the public organizes around a common interest and goal. This happens when citizens feel empowered to take action in their communities and organize together. Individual citizens may not have a lot of power on their own, but when acting together they can make a huge impact. This happens through many tactics including: voting, lobbying, direct action, telling their story in the media, planning events and rallies and more. Individuals can have a huge amount of power over local politics if they work together. The three phases of community organizing are Creating Demand, Establishing Accountability, and Taking Delivery⁵

Neighbors and Community Members:

- Interested in the visual aesthetics of a school and schoolyard.
- Interested in the green infrastructure components as relates to water issues in community.
- Generally, public cares about taxes, jobs and economy.
- Under the Philadelphia Green Schools model, the school will be a community hub with programming and services not just for children and parents, but more generally

⁵ “Grassroots Organizing Training Manual”, Sierra Club

for community members. This component will be key to building a broad base of community support beyond those who have direct relationship with schools.

- Have the ability to organize through Friends of Schools groups and other community organizations.

Parents and Grandparents:

- Interested in all the things listed above for community members.
- Interested in their child's academic performance and grades, as well as connecting their child with opportunities.
- Care about health, safety and welfare of their child.
- Will come to events if the child has something to "show-off".
- Have the ability to organize through Parent- Teacher Associations and other local groups.

Students and Children:

- Young people typically have less political power because they are not voters, however, they can influence their parents and grandparents. Since they represent the future, they can have large symbolic meaning.
- Driven by things that are interesting, stimulating and fun.
- Can feel empowered by being involved in the community and given problem-solving power.

Teachers, Librarians and Support Staff:

- Interested in learning outcomes of the students and overall performance of their schools.
- Generally teachers and support staff are over-workers and under-paid so they need additional incentives to do anything above and beyond their job, including after-school programming or additional curriculum development. The Green Schools program should figure out how to give extra resources to teachers and provide special job training.
- Teachers are at the frontlines of actually teaching curriculum to students, so it will be critical to have their buy-in. They can also put pressure on their school principals and have the ability to organize through the Federation of Teachers Union.

Organizations and Groups:

The following is a set of organizations, groups and departments that have related work to green schools. These collectives have more power than individuals to effect change and influence key decision-makers. Some have power because they provide funding and resources, other have people power through mobilizing democratic action.

Labor Unions:

- Interested in good jobs, workers' rights and economy.
- Pro-development as long as labor friendly.
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) is the largest construction union in the city.

- Labor donates money and backs political candidates, including Mayor Elect Jim Kenney, several of the City Councilors and those in State government.
- Have thus far been outside of the green schools conversation/movement, but have the potential to be either a big ally or opponent. It will be important to connect the green infrastructure, green schools and public education reform to improving the economy and job creation. Green infrastructure provides a huge opportunity for good green jobs. Similarly, if they see green infrastructure as being a barrier to future development or making construction more difficult, they could also become an opponent.

Federation of Teachers Union (<http://www.pft.org>):

- This union is 17,000 members strong and is comprised of teachers, librarians and support staff.
- Care about fair and adequate pay for all members; fight against budget cuts to public education.
- Provide opportunities for professional development.
- Similar to labor unions, the Teachers Union has not yet been involved in the green schools movement, but they have the potential to be a big ally or opponent. It is critical that they see green schools as an opportunity to improve the curriculum and bring more resources into the public school system and ultimately the members they support.

Trust for Public Land (<https://www.tpl.org/our-work/parks-for-people/parks-people—philadelphia>):

- National non-profit with growing presence in Philadelphia. Focused on protecting and conserving green space.
- Have been involved directly in greening several school yards and are in partnerships with others to green an additional 20 schools over the next five years. Provides funding and design expertise.

Community Design Collaborative (<http://www.cdesignc.org>):

- Local non-profit collective that provides pro-bono design work for green schoolyard transformations. Has worked on over 20 schoolyards thus far.
- Worked with Philadelphia Water Dept. to create a guide called *Transforming Philadelphia's Schoolyards*.

The Big Sandbox (<http://thebigsandbox.org>):

- Local non-profit that works with community members to support and build green infrastructure and community space.
- Provides thought leadership and funding for green schoolyards.

Parent-Teacher Associations (<http://www.papta.org>):

- Collectives of parents, teachers and educators that work on improving public educations.

Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools (<http://appsphilly.net>):

- Grassroots organization of parents, community members and educators aimed at preserving public education in Philadelphia.
- Care about equitable funding and preventing budget cuts to public education.
- Interested in public schools as center for democratic society.
- Thus far has not been engaged in green schools, but should be a powerful ally. Their power comes from mobilizing community members, building democratic action and leveraging that power in electoral politics.

Philadelphia Water Department (<http://www.phila.gov/water>):

- Department of the City of Philadelphia in charge of water, sewers and storm water.
- Required by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to reduce stormwater runoff and improve water quality in the rivers and streams of Philadelphia.
- Been the main leader and driver of implementing green infrastructure solutions. Provides technical expertise and funding for green schoolyard transformations.

Parks and Recreation (<http://www.phila.gov/parksandrecreation>):

- Department of the City of Philadelphia in charge of open space and recreation activities.
- Operates and manages a large portion of city-owned land.
- Already working on green infrastructure and green schoolyards.

Decision- Makers:

Governor Tom Wolf:

- Cares about education and has made it a priority for his office.
- Moves forward state budget, part of which allocates money to the Philadelphia School District.
- Appoints three out of five members of the School Reform Commission, including the Chair.
- While Gov. Wolf is the top decision-maker in the state of Pennsylvania his power over Philadelphia School District is limited to the budget and the SRC. However, since he appoints members to the SRC he could encourage them to make green schools a priority both in the curriculum and budget.

Mayor Jim Kenney:

- Sat on city council (at large) for 23 years prior to running for Mayor.
- Interested in public education, better jobs, and community policing.
- Appoints two members of SRC

City Council:

- Consists of ten district-based city council positions plus six at-large councilmembers.
- Can host public hearings on important issues, including education and school district; each councilor also has discretionary fund to provide resources for projects.

- There is a big opportunity for city council as a whole or for individual councilors to be supporters of green schools. While they don't have that much direct influence over how the school district is run, they can use their political leadership to put pressure on the SRC. They also approve a portion of the school district budget and can provide resources for green schoolyard transformations.

School Reform Commission:

- Five-member committee in charge of setting the strategy for the school district, including strategic priorities and budgetary decisions. In charge of decisions around charter-schools and prioritizing under-performing schools.
- Cares about the overall financial health and academic performance of the public school district. Has faced criticism in the past for being too pro-privatization and closing public schools.
- Could be a key decision-maker in building on the schoolyard transformations to Green Schools that incorporate curriculum changes. This will take a shift in how the commission and others think of education reform. Green Schools will be

Superintendent William Hite:

- Appointed by the SRC and oversees school district operations including hiring other top-level administrative staff and setting curricula based off priorities set by the SRC.

Principals:

- Each school has an individual principal who is a local decision-maker for that campus. They oversee the daily operation of their school and the hiring and management of teachers.
- Have the opportunity to communicate and leverage upwards to the superintendent as well as advocate for their individual schools and teachers.

Coalition Building Opportunities:

The key to building broad support will be building broad coalitions. There are existing partnerships between Mayor Nutter, Trust for Public Land, Parks and Recreation, the Water Department and School Reform Commission. It is important that green schools not just be seen as an environmental issue, but a city-wide opportunity to address many issues including public education, jobs training, cycles of poverty, and public health.

Thus far the expected stakeholders have been engaged in green schoolyards, including city departments and non-profits focused on green infrastructure and the environment. In order to scale-up the existing green schoolyard transformations and implement a curriculum component a more diverse coalition is needed. A diverse coalition will help build broad-based demand for the program and in turn put pressure on decision-makers. A broader coalition will also help establish accountability and credibility.

Recommended opportunities for building coalitions include:

- Engage those working on public education reform and improving public education. This is seen as a critical topic to many decision-makers and community members

alike. A robust Green Schools program can help improve education performance by helping children learn and build new skills. This coalition building can start at the neighborhood level with teachers and support staff. While the Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools may be seen as a radical grassroots group, they also have played a critical role in mobilizing parents. Similarly, the Federation of Teachers Union has played a key role in keeping resources in the public school system.

- Another opportunity is to work with labor unions and those who are interested in job creation. Green schools are potentially a good avenue to help young adults build skills that will help them enter the work force after graduation. Green Infrastructure design, construction, and maintenance also is an emerging field with potential for new jobs that could be supported by the labor unions. The labor unions have a lot of influence in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania policy and could help bring in more private-public partnerships.

Recommended next steps:

This document should be used as the basis and groundwork for future campaign strategy and development. Next steps include:

1. Form a Strategic Planning Committee that bring together diverse stakeholders from the city, non-profits, public education and labor;
2. Create a shared long-term vision and campaign goals that outline short, medium and long-term benchmarks;
3. Look for points of leverage with decision-makers and potential policies that can help institutionalize green schools and set a curriculum shift;
4. Build public demand through grassroots organizing, events, rallies and public forums.

APPENDIX:

Decision-Makers and Stakeholders:

Name	Organization	Title/Role	Notes and Interests
School District			
Marjorie Neff	School Reform Commission	Chair	Former teacher and principal; Appointed by Gov. Wolf; Concerned about school performance and financial stability.
William J Green	School Reform Commission	Member; Former Chair	Appointed by former Gov. Corbett
Sylvia P Simms	School Reform Commission	Member	
Farah Jimenez	School Reform Commission	Member	
Feather Houstoun	School Reform Commission	Member	
William Hite	Philadelphia School District	CEO and Superintendent of Philadelphia School District	Hired by SRC; Operates School District and hires the Administrative team.
Jerry Jordan	Federation of Teachers Union	President	17,000 member union of teachers, librarians, nurses and other support staff
City of Philadelphia			
Jim Kenney	City of Philadelphia	Mayor	Elected Nov. 2015; Prior member of city council for 23 years; From South Philly; Ran on platform that included public education improvements, jobs and community policing; Interested

			in community schools.
Darrell Clarke	City Council	President; District 5	Current priorities include public education and School-Based Community Family Centers (provide range of public health and social services).
Mark Squilla	City Council	District 1	
Kenyatta Johnson	City Council	District 2	
Jannie Blackwell	City Council	District 3	
Curtis Jones, Jr	City Council	District 4	Vice Chair of Committee on Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs
Darrell L. Clarke	City Council	District 5	
Bobby Henon	City Council	District 6	
Maria D. Quinones-Sanchez	City Council	District 7	Interested in schools
Cindy Bass	City Council	District 8	Chair of Committee on Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs
Marian B. Tasco	City Council	District 9	
Brian J. O'Neill	City Council	District 10	
W. Wilson Goode, JR	City Council	At Large	
William K Greenlee	City Council	At Large	
Dennis O'Brien	City Council	At Large	
David Oh	City Council	At Large	
Blondell Reynolds Brown	City Council	At Large	Chair of Committee on the Environment
State of Pennsylvania			
Tom Wolf	State of Pennsylvania	Governor	Elected 2014; Democrat;

Possible Partners and Funders:

Name	Organization	Role	Notes and Interests
Beth Miller	Community Design Collaborative	Executive Director	Provides pro-bono schoolyard designs;

			Well-respected and trusted
Lois Brink	The Big Sandbox	Co-Founder	Major thought leader; Experience with Denver's green school program
	Trust for Public Land		National organization, relatively new to Philadelphia. Provides funding for green school yards.
	Eagles Youth Partnership		Local non-profit focused on youth, health and education.