

DISSERTATION

ORGANIZATIONAL TRAINING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING FOR
INCREASING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

Submitted by

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School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2012

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ABSTRACT

ORGANIZATIONAL TRAINING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING FOR INCREASING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

From the early twentieth century to the present, citizen participation in U.S. public institutions—particularly schools—has continually decreased. The trend has been linked to the bureaucratization of public schools and their increasing reliance on expert knowledge for solutions to school- and education-related problems. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of a parent training program designed to increase a school district’s capacity for public participation.

The program—known as Leadership St. Vrain—provided citizens knowledge about school district operations and management (know-how) and relationship-building opportunities with key decision makers (know-who). The mixed-methods study was designed to include two original survey instruments, follow-up interviews, and archival documents to evaluate the affect of the training on participants. Participants reported strong growth in domains for knowledge, relationship, willingness, efficacy, and action. Follow-up interviews with training participants and parents who served as school Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) presidents, as well as an analysis of archival documents indicated a secondary ripple-effect among PTO members who did not take the training, as well as with other citizens and the larger community.

Keywords: public education, civic engagement, stakeholder engagement, public deliberation, social capital

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am profoundly grateful to my son Larkin and my partner Wendy Norris for their unconditional love and support. I also want to thank the people of the St. Vrain Valley School District, the Department of Communications, Superintendent Dr. Don Haddad, and the many brave parents who are stepping out of their comfort zones to advocate for what's best for our children and our communities. My gratitude also goes to Colorado State University, the Graduate School of Education, and particularly to Martin Carcasson, Ph.D., Carole Makela, Ph.D., Don, Venneberg, Ph.D., and Barbara Wallner, Ph.D.

Dedicated to:

Thomas M. Poynton (1910–1983)

Mary E. Poynton (1913–2009)

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CHAPTER 1: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

On average, every year throughout the quarter century after 1960 another 1.2 percent of all American families with kids – more than 250,000 families a year – dropped out of the PTA.

Robert Putnam, 2000

...professional educators have difficulty conceiving of a responsible public because they have little or no experience with such a citizenry. And the experience they do have makes them wary.

Dave Mathews, 2006

Introduction

Public participation has been defined “as any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision making and uses public input to make decisions,” (Sarno, as quoted in International Association of Public Participation, 2006, pg. 2). Central to public participation is the idea that individuals or groups affected by a particular decision should be given an opportunity to participate in making that decision. However, when institutional leaders bypass the difficult work of inclusionary decision making, the outcomes can include inadequate or misinformed decisions, diminished stakeholder trust and buy-in, increased disengagement from public affairs, rejection of institutional policies and decisions, and refusal to provide financial, volunteer, vocal, or other types of support. Fischer (2009) attributed the lost connection to the natural tendency as organizations grow in size and complexity and become more centralized and hierarchical. He stated that public institutions were lacking “well-developed political arrangements that provide citizens with multiple and varied participatory opportunities to deliberate basic political issues” (p. 61). Accordingly, administrators of public institutions are evaluating their decision making processes and exploring strategies to authentically and systematically engage stakeholders to better understand shared

problems and the collective well-being (Mathews, 2006). This requires working through the complexities posed by individual interests, perceptions, and positions, to find workable solutions that garner stakeholder support (Yankelovich & Friedman, 2010).

Few institutions have a stakeholder base more diverse in culture, values, beliefs, abilities, influences, and commitment than U.S. public schools. And few institutions have been more adversely affected by waning stakeholder interest and participation. Currently, public education is under increasing censure by elected officials, individuals with specific business interests, and partisan media commentators. For example, at least two candidates running for president in the 2012 election—Rick Perry and Ron Paul—supported the complete dissolution of the United States Department of Education.

Public disengagement in public schools became increasingly evident throughout U.S. society in the early 20th century. By 1927, John Dewey, the influential Progressive Era social scientist, predicted that citizens would struggle to fulfill their democratic duties given the increasingly technical nature of our culture (Fischer, 2009). As the role of technical expertise grew, some professional educators believed it was their job to coax citizens to accept a new way of thinking; others quietly cut citizens out of decision making processes (Mathews, 2006). In education and other public institutions, a growing class of public policy specialists took charge and did their work without accountability to the public (Dahl, 1989). The transition from citizen-driven to technically-based and expert-driven institutions pushed citizens to the periphery. In the words of one commentator of the time, while Americans were ". . . living in a time of big decisions, they know they are not making any" (Mills, 1959, p. 5).

For decades since then, district officials have grown increasingly isolated from the

public and have made far-reaching decisions with minimal input or collaboration. This growing autonomy among educators has had long-term consequences in reshaping the public's attitude toward a public institution that was once revered. Citizen distrust in public institutions increased in the 1960s and 1970s (Mathews, 2006). Despite some efforts of school officials to build more inclusive organizational cultures, the relationship between citizens and school administrators was further strained (Gillon, 2000).

Developments in the larger society also impacted the ability of public school administrators to deepen their relationship with stakeholders. State and federal court decisions imposed laws and injunctions that, while well-intended, frequently left citizens with unresolved feelings, resentments, and frustrations, particularly when given no opportunity to offer input on the decisions handed down. For example, the historic ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (United States Reports, 1954) made it unconstitutional for individual citizens and community groups to be involved in determining local policies about issues such as school segregation (Bauman, 1996). After 1960, many citizens perceived government involvement in general as excessive (Gillon, 2000). Evans (1995) argued that government officials had assumed a caretaker role of public schools. As public school policies came under increasing control of court decisions and government regulations, citizens' ability to impact local schools declined, and growing numbers of citizens withdrew their involvement.

The strengthened role of the government combined with the decreasing ability of citizens to influence local school policies empowered school administrators, who had little motivation to seek citizen engagement in policy decisions. Researchers found that school administrators resisted citizen engagement when citizen opinions contradicted

school law or their own inclination to protect the status quo. Administrator resistance to public participation further alienated citizens and confirmed their perceptions that their public schools did not, in fact, belong to them (Mathews, 2006). After decades of increasing regulations, state administrators assumed a custodial role in public schools (Evans, 1995). Over the years, many school officials professed their support for citizen participation but, in reality, had no interest in allowing citizens to upset their policies and plans (Sexton, 2004). Since the 1950s, the vibrant tradition of citizen engagement in local school affairs steadily receded and professional school administrators increasingly became the dominant force in problem solving and decision making.

Public Engagement/Disengagement

Insulating schools from citizen involvement strained the formerly close bonds that existed between the citizens and their schools. Fewer parents attended school-related functions, joined committees, or sought leadership roles on Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and school boards (Putnam, 2000). The experiences and perspectives parents had formerly provided to complement the findings and recommendations of professional educators were significantly lessened. The lack of citizen involvement also resulted in greater distrust and less buy-in for the decisions made. According to McNeil (2002), “There has perhaps been no time in our history when the links between public education and democracy have been as tenuous as they are right now” (p. 243). Some have argued that this distancing between institution and citizen has resulted in school districts losing valuable input, public support, and commitment for new policies and change initiatives. In many communities across the country where school funding is critical to maintain programs and services, the public is increasingly reluctant to support tax measures.

Disengagement between educators and citizens also impeded the development of functional relationships and productive dialogue. Without collaborative problem solving, policymaking, and shared governance, administrators grew comfortable conducting business and implementing policies without the difficulty of working through complex or controversial problems. Citizens attended fewer school meetings, avoided tedious discussions about education policy, and were increasingly unwilling to assume the responsibilities of a PTA officer or school board member. In short, disengagement engendered organizational and civic apathy.

When the relationship between educators and parents is strained, leaders from each side with different positions and perspectives can become combative or estranged. Instead of working for important systemic change that most individuals and groups support, they focus their efforts on garnering partisan support (Farkas & Johnson, 1993). The confrontational nature of communication in that atmosphere leads to higher levels of distrust. Without a well-planned, well-facilitated, and deliberative process, participants can become enmeshed in “a web of suspicion, extreme partisanship, competitiveness, and poor communication,” (Mathews, 2006, p. 35). When educators and citizens become alienated, their willingness to engage in productive dialogue about shared concerns is weakened and the school district administrators’ capacity for public participation is greatly diminished.

Putnam (2000) referred to the ability and willingness for people to engage in productive dialogue as *social capital*, a term he defined as "the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from the connections among people and their social networks" (p. 19). When school leaders engage with citizens in meaningful dialogues about shared

problems, they increase the capacity of community members to address and solve problems. This also broadens citizen participation, deepens understanding of differing viewpoints, strengthens personal relationships, builds trust, and achieves better outcomes. An inclusive and well-facilitated process that nurtures engagement serves to strengthen social capital and favorably impacts the quality of education (Putnam, 2001). While many educators and other key decision makers in the community believe the stereotype that non-expert citizens cannot be relied upon to make valuable contributions to complex problems, extensive research has shown that when provided with information and other tools, citizens can successfully and meaningfully address complex issues (Yankelovich & Friedman, 2010).

There has been a systematic decline of citizen participation in activities like attending school board meetings; Americans are less involved in their children's schools and their children's education (Putnam, 2000). Mathews (2006) attributed this to a reduced sense of ownership and responsibility for public schools. Fragmentation and extreme individualism have negatively impacted our tradition of citizen engagement, causing Americans in general to withdraw from politics and civic life (Harwood, 2005).

While Putnam (2000) attributed the steady disengagement of Americans from schools and other civic activities to a change in generational values, other researchers faulted an ever-increasing education bureaucracy that systematically disempowered citizens through court-ordered mandates, federal regulations, and expert governance. Government measures designed to strengthen schools and ensure their stability introduced a new layer of complexity that made participation by citizens less accessible (Conley, 1993). School administrators, in turn, became reluctant to engage citizens

because they had come to believe they alone had the expertise, training, and knowledge to know what was in the best interest of the students (Gurke, 2008). One veteran educator reported being trained to *counter* public interest rather than work *with* it (Mathews, 2006). Another reported concentrating his efforts on preventing outside influences from “messing with their plans” (Boo, 1992, p. 24). After attempting to participate in controversial issues concerning their schools, citizens reported being ignored and feeling unappreciated (Gurke, 2008).

Citizen participants specifically identified administrators as their "greatest obstacle" to improved relationships in their school community (Doble Research Associates, 2000, p. 2). As public schools became increasingly bureaucratized and school affairs became increasingly reliant on expert-driven solutions and policies, administrators distanced themselves from citizen involvement. Professionals and experts with education credentials became the new gold standard for school problem solving and decision making. A complex and interwoven system of laws, court orders, and regulations were essentially used as a shield to dissuade citizens from getting too involved or to risk being embarrassed by their lack of expertise.

Disengaged citizens are likely to become adversarial. Coleman and Gotze (2001) stated “The alternative to engaging the public will not be an unengaged public, but a public with its own agenda and an understandable hostility to decision making processes that ignore them” (p. 12). Furthermore, the likelihood for confrontation was exacerbated when the public was not represented or when individuals or groups held highly polarized positions (Putnam, 2000). Without deliberative processes that proactively engaged the public, school administrators have allowed single-issue activists and special interest

groups to overpower many public issues (Putnam, 2000). Mathews (2006) described individuals who lost sight of the common good and “besieged the schools in order to win personal concessions” (p. 35).

Skocpol (1999) summarized this phenomenon:

In recent times the old civic America has been bypassed and shoved to the side by a gaggle of professionally dominated advocacy groups and nonprofit institutions rarely attached to membership worthy of the name. Ideas of shared citizenship and possibilities for democratic leverage have been compromised in the process. (pp. 505-506)

Benefits of Public Engagement

In the 21st century, leaders of U.S. public institutions—town councils, police departments, school districts—are expected to manage conflicts that emerge from the competing interests and values of citizens. Seemingly mundane issues such as school menus, bus schedules, school boundaries, and curriculum choices routinely evoke intense controversy between citizens and school staff members or district staff members. Tensions are often heightened when school officials attempt to implement new practices and policies without providing an opportunity for discussion and deliberation. It is common for school officials and their expert advisers to develop solutions and then implement a “decide, announce and defend” (Yosie & Herbst, 1998, p. 24) tactic to achieve a preferred outcome. This approach to problem solving results in citizens feeling shut out (Gillon, 2000) and increased levels of distrust (Mathews, 2006). Even when a targeted initiative is successfully implemented, the increased level of public distrust resulting from an exclusive process can take years to reconcile. In situations where experts solved a problem efficiently and successfully without the public, excluding citizens was still a missed opportunity to engage with the community, explore unintended

consequences, and obtain information and other input that could contribute to a better relationship, if not an improved solution.

Rosell and Gantwerk (2010) argued that the interconnected nature of today's world makes it imperative that public leaders in all sectors of our society promote participatory problem solving. Because citizens do not automatically come together to address shared problems, it is the moral imperative of today's leaders to intervene and engage people in public matters (Fusarelli, Kowalski & Petersen, 2011). This can be a daunting task for leaders who are unaccustomed to designing and leading public processes that engage diverse individuals with conflicting views and interests. However, according to Yankelovich and Friedman (2010), "An entire movement is taking place in academia, local government, and the nonprofit sector that is dedicated to developing the tools, strategies, and know-how to promote greater public understanding and engagement" (p. 6). Sixteen distinct cases of public participation processes led by school district administrators were documented in one research study (Schweitz & Martens, 2005).

School districts are not alone in needing to reconnect with citizens. Boyte (2009) stated, "Institutions of many kinds—from schools to nonprofits, businesses to congregations, government agencies to universities—have lost community roots" (p. 2). Public institutions must act as convener and facilitator when reconnecting with citizens and providing information and tools for successful participation. Rosenberg (2003) emphasized the need for leaders to design opportunities to cultivate citizen engagement and collaborative problem solving. The goal, stated Chambers, was to revitalize democratic involvement by "...producing reasonable, well-informed opinion in which

participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants” (2003, p. 309). Feldman and Khademian (2007) said the role of public administrators must be recast as a facilitator of community participation. Fischer (2009) echoed this and called for “...a new breed of participatory professionals” (p. 71) who can organize and facilitate citizen participation.

Yankelovich stated that public policy that is sound and sustainable is rooted in public participation and “our institutions need to develop more effective ways of helping citizens work through the issues and move steadily along the learning curve” (2010, p. 6). The skills that school districts and other public institutions must help citizens develop include “relationship building, tolerance for ambiguity, ability to deal with conflict constructively, and the capacity to act in open environments with no predetermined outcomes” (Boyte, 2009, p. 26). Friedman called for leaders to aim for increasing capacity for public participation by instilling in our communities “greater ability for effective, inclusive, deliberative problem solving” (2010, p. 132).

Kadlec and Friedman (2010) described an institution’s ability to build capacity for public engagement as an embedded “set of attitudes and practices integrated into the institutions and culture of a community” (pp. 77-78). While independent interest groups often attempt to engage citizens in public participation, Fischer (2009) stated these organizations were not well suited for the job given shortcomings in their organizational leadership.

When school district officials initiate a well-designed public participation process, the “reciprocity and trustworthiness” that Putnam (2000, p. 19) referred to in his definition of social capital creates the basis for meaningful exchange. Public participation

increases citizen trust of public officials, in part, because it signals their willingness to listen and engage in a deliberative dialogue. All benefit from the interaction when the intention is to understand one another and work through a problem to arrive at the best possible solution. Working with trained facilitators who are skilled in a variety of deliberative techniques allows public officials and citizens to consider relevant facts from multiple viewpoints, listen to one another, and openly evaluate various options, consider the underlying tensions and difficult choices inherent in most public issues, and arrive at a conclusion for action based on reasoned public judgment (Carcasson, 2009).

Increased citizen participation in schools has been linked to better solutions to shared problems (Fung, 2004) and higher levels of stakeholder agreement and trust (Langsdorf, 2003). Facilitating opportunities for citizens to deliberate on shared school-related problems has been shown to increase their understanding of the complex issues involved and allowed them to develop the skills of deliberation and judgment (Yankelovich & Friedman, 2010).

Another positive outcome resulting from increased public participation and parent engagement in schools is improved student achievement (Rice et al., 2000). Extensive data collected by Henderson and Berla (1994) revealed that parent involvement in their child's education had a significant impact on student achievement, while the schools the children attended also improved. Comer and Haynes (1993) found that public participation by parents impacted school performance when citizens were actually engaged in problem solving and making real decisions. Carcasson (2009) warned, however, that initiatives intended to give citizens an impression of deliberative decision making but are, in fact, without substance, result in a sense of apathy and cynicism

among citizens.

Increasing Public Participation

Colorado ranks 48th in the nation in spending on K-12 education (Fermanich, 2011). In fact, education funding in Colorado has been reduced to the point that parents and school districts have sued state officials for failure to meet the constitutional requirement to adequately fund public schools (*Lobato v. State of Colorado, 2009*).

Researchers have affirmed the value of providing opportunities for disenfranchised parents to become involved in the decision making process of school districts (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Moll, 1990). Many have noted the relationship between involved citizens and stronger support for their schools (Bass, 1990; Davies, Burch & Johnson, 1992; Decker & Decker, 1994; Mathews, 2006; Parmelee, 2006; Yukl, 1994). Several researchers also acknowledged the lack of data on efforts to successfully reverse citizen disengagement (Cohen & Rogers, 1995, Fung, 2004; Hirst, 1994). More recently, Yankelovich (2010) called for “systematic, longitudinal case studies that, like action research, can shed light on how citizens develop their views and their relationship with leaders in the context of their lived realities” (p. 108).

Current Study

This study was based on a program specifically developed and implemented by the researcher and a concerned parent to improve community participation and engagement. In the program, a series of meetings were offered to provide citizens with information about school district operations and management (referred to as know-how), and relationship-building opportunities with key decision makers associated with the school district (referred to as know-who). The purpose of the current study was to

determine if this training increased levels of participant knowledge, relationship, willingness, efficacy, and action with or about school district and education-related issues, and whether the training had a secondary ripple effect on other individuals and groups in the school district and community.

The training under investigation was called Leadership St. Vrain (LSV), and took place in the St. Vrain Valley School District (SVVSD), located in northern Colorado. This public school district includes a total of 54 schools—from elementary to high school—with an enrollment of approximately 27,000 students.

Invitations and information about LSV was distributed on the district website, in district and school newsletters, and in press releases published in area newspapers. Participants in the program were self-selected. No extensive efforts were made to increase participation among specific parent populations. While informational materials were made available on the district website and at every school, all materials were published in English. The principals of the Title I schools in the district received personal calls approximately four months in advance of the program and were encouraged to identify members of their school community who might be willing to participate in the program.

Sixteen parents registered for the 2009-2010 LSV cohort and 33 parents registered for the 2010-2011 cohort. All of the participants in both cohorts were parents of students enrolled in SVVSD. While the majority of participants were white, several parents represented ethnic minority groups (mostly Latino). Most participants were female, however, the 2009-2010 cohort included one minority male and the 2010-2011 parent group included four white males. Data concerning the economic or employment

status or the racial groups of the participants was not collected for this study.

Participants attended 10 meetings over eight months during the course of the school year, with each meeting approximately 2.5 hours in length. The know-how components of LSV were based on presentations about all aspects of district operations, including school finance, state education funding, state and federal school law, state and district-level governance, school board policies, regulatory requirements, curriculum, and information about school operations and management. Each meeting also included a know-who portion by including opportunities for relationship building with SVVSD board members and administrators, as well as local and state elected and appointed officials, who were invited speakers.

Hypothesis and Research Questions

The following hypothesis was explored in this research study: A parent training that combines operational knowledge (know how) and relationship building (know who) will increase the school district's capacity for public participation. The following research questions were posed:

1. What knowledge did participants gain from the LSV training?
2. Did the LSV training lead to enhanced relationships between the participants and key decision makers?
3. Did participants report an increased willingness to be involved in education-related activities from the LSV training?
4. Did participants' efficacy in collaborative problem solving increase from the LSV training?

5. What new education-related actions did participants perform after their involvement in the LSV training?
6. Has the LSV training had a secondary or “ripple” effect impacting other citizens, schools, or the greater community?

Assumptions

It was assumed that the LSV training curriculum and schedule were optimized to provide the most benefit to a majority of participants in terms of content, scheduled meeting times, and delivery.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unloving; acted upon, it destroys our democracy.

John Dewey, 1910

We must continue to have schools that are the center of their communities, where children are students, not products, and parents are citizens, not customers.

Diane Ravitch, 2010a

Introduction

Americans have been withdrawing from politics and public life for decades (Harwood, 2005), and the most dramatic decrease in citizen engagement has occurred with public schools (Putnam, 2000). In this literature review, the relevant research and commentary about public participation in education are discussed, starting with an analysis of the historical developments that have negatively impacted the public's involvement in the public school system. The rationale for increased citizen engagement in schools is also reviewed.

Historical Context

Thomas Jefferson and James Madison considered free public education as a way to protect democracy from individuals or groups who sought to manipulate an uneducated population and threaten governmental stability (Parmelee, 2006). Later, in response to the U.S. industrial revolution (1820 to 1870), the national interest in public education was expanded to include economic stability and the need for a steady supply of workers prepared for blue- and white-collar jobs (Westbrook, 1996). Throughout the Progressive Era (1890 to 1920), when millions of poor, uneducated immigrants arrived in the U.S., a period of increased activism and reform initiated the bureaucratization and centralization

of public education, initiating a shift from local political influences to education experts (Bauman, 1996). The move to centralized public education was intended to increase access to standardized public schooling for the purpose of providing a workforce to improve productivity.

Government Regulation

Federal and state government regulation of public education increased following the Supreme Court's ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 (United States Reports, 1954). In addition to ending segregation, this ruling added more bureaucracy to the public education system by centralizing control in the federal government (Parmelee, 2006). The intervention by the Supreme Court altered the role of citizens in relationship to their local schools, as it was no longer constitutional for local individuals or groups to determine such policies as school segregation based on race (Bauman, 1996). The influence of citizens was confined to minor concerns, such as raising funds for the school library or planning the prom. Parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and school boards were no longer making decisions about issues related to school or district policy.

Following the publication of the influential government report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), the role of state legislators in education policy and governance was strengthened. With increased regulations on public school operations, state legislators assumed a custodial role of public schools (Evans, 1995), which further reduced the opportunity for citizen involvement (Mathews, 2006) and increased alienation between school officials and citizens (Gurke, 2008). McDermott (1999) summarized the decline in citizen participation:

In many communities nationwide, board of education candidates frequently are elected unopposed. Turnout in board of education elections is as low as, or lower than, other local elections. Few citizens attend board of education meetings, and those who do contribute little, if anything, to deliberations and are likely to learn very little about matters before the board listening to what goes on at the meetings. (p. 55)

While a larger bureaucracy was intended to protect schools from arbitrary and capricious intervention, it also decreased citizen access to policymaking and the ability for citizens to influence change (Conley, 1993).

Reform Movements

Two major school reforms of the 20th century were compulsory education and equal access. While not the only reforms of that century, these reforms impacted the role of citizens in decision making in their schools.

During the early 20th century, a variety of social grievances that included child labor abuse prompted greater interest among federal legislators in mandatory schooling for children. By 1918, all states had implemented compulsory education for children up to age 14 (Katz, 1976). Then, in the 1950s and 1960s, the civil rights movement led to a series of Supreme Court decisions, the most famous of which was *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (United States Reports, 1954). Subsequent decisions guaranteed the rights of the disabled and other student populations in need of equal access to education and protection from discriminatory practices. By expanding access for disenfranchised groups in public schools through court decisions at the federal level, many citizens experienced a loss of control over their schools at the local level.

Parmelee (2006) stated that while the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision “had the desired effect of putting an end (at least formally) to segregation, it also had the effect of further bureaucratizing and centralizing control of public education in the United

States, despite the fact that local communities and states still had ostensible decision making power in this area” (p. 12). The increased role of the federal government further strained the relationships between public school administrators and citizens (Gillon, 2000).

In the 1980s, many districts across the country implemented site-based management (SBM) programs in schools to engage teachers, parents, and others in decision making. Meyers and Stonehill (1993) defined SBM as “a strategy to improve education by transferring significant decision-making authority for state and district offices to individual schools” (p. 2). By involving teachers, parents, and other community members in administrative decision-making activities, it was thought that a better learning model would be created with the SBM model (Meyers & Stonehill, 1993). David (1994) wrote that SBM shifted decision-making authority toward the school and community and away from central office administrators. While SBM initiatives were difficult to successfully implement and sustain, the intention to include the voices of parents and other community members was clear. “In general, those who have the strongest personal stake in and the most immediate connection to the school are the ones who should tackle the issue” (David, 1994, p. 7). But researchers also recognized the difficulty of engaging parents and teachers in decision-making and problem resolution without training and without experience working as a group. Ultimately, most SBM programs were abandoned. While Malen (1999) characterized SBM as a springboard for other forms of engagement, she concurred with other researchers who questioned evidence in support of its effectiveness.

A new generation of elected officials and business leaders have questioned whether public education, with the current level of bureaucracy and regulation, can be adapted to the needs of a knowledge economy (Bauman, 1996). Ravitch (2010b) argued that elected officials and business interests “. . . want school districts and states to replace low-performing public schools with privately managed charter schools on the assumption any school run by private management is bound to be superior to schools in the public sector” (p. 8). For example, in Douglass County, Colorado, school board members—with support from the Colorado State Board of Education—unanimously voted to implement a voucher program for students attending private schools (“Friday Churn: Voucher Appeal,” 2011). The school district and Colorado Department of Education were subsequently sued and, at the time of this writing, the matter is in litigation (Larue, et al. v. Colorado Board of Education, et al., 2011).

District Consolidation

Another result of the increased bureaucratization and centralization of school governance was the systematic consolidation of smaller school districts. Between 1930 and the late 1970s, Tyack (1978) found that the number of districts had decreased from 127,000 to 14,700, and by the 2008-2009 school year, districts nationwide were further reduced to 13,809 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). This reduction in districts increased the number of citizens per elected school board member, making access to school officials and oversight regarding leader accountability more difficult.

School Supply Business

The growth of school supply businesses, linking private interests to public schools, was another result of bureaucratization (Bauman, 1996). In the post-World War II years as the population increased and suburbs developed, school builders and textbook publishers got involved in the decision making processes of school districts, especially in regard to centralized purchasing (Bauman, 1996). By the close of the 1950s, “all three branches of state government demonstrated their authority and influence in education policy making” (Bauman, 1996, p. 47).

Educator Professionalization

After the school centralization movement that followed the Progressive Era, a growing number of educators believed that experts, not the public, were best qualified to make school decisions (Katz, 1975). This was a period when public school teachers and administrators gained greater power in decision-making and problem solving, which encouraged more of them to obtain higher levels of professional training. Mathews (2006) stated, “. . . political issues in the educational debate became masked as scientific and technical considerations, which were not considered to be in the public's province” (p. 29). One teacher, for example, compared her work to brain surgery and complained that the public had no place in her operating room (Mathews, 2006). Gurke (2008) reported that educators were not inclined to engage with citizens because, unlike ordinary citizens, “they had worked hard to achieve a level of expertise and know what is best for educating all children in the district” (p. 1). The attitude that experts alone had the privilege of knowing the solutions furthered citizen alienation from their public

institutions. “When Americans reach out and their efforts are rebuffed, they usually throw up their hands and walk away” (Mathews, 2006, p. 9).

By the 1970s, public pressure for greater engagement was often a reaction against a professionalized and specialized bureaucracy to which citizens had been overly insulated (Zimmerman, 1972). Renewed attempts by school district officials to include citizens, especially parents, were seen as insincere, and designed to placate citizens rather than to authentically involve them in decision making, problem solving, and other deliberative activities that resulted in policy governance (Wadsworth, 1997).

Social Capital

The term *social capital* was first coined by Lyda Hanifan (1916), state supervisor of rural schools in West Virginia, to describe the accumulation of ties and trust among rural families, based on their growing involvement with a school-based community center. Putnam (2000) described social capital as “the connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p. 19). Some researchers and political commentators have associated the decline of civic engagement in public schools to a decrease in the cultivation and development of social capital. Mathews (2006) found that without the experience of participating in tough decision-making, a community lost its public voice.

A genuine public voice emerges when three conditions are met. First, a diverse body of citizens had to talk, preferably face-to-face (as opposed to sitting in an audience and being talked to). Second, the framework for the conversation has to present all the major options for the action fairly, each with both its advantages and disadvantages disclosed. Finally, people have to weigh the costs and benefits of each option until they get a sense of what the community will and won't do to address the problem at hand. (p. 69)

By overzealously safeguarding their role as expert decision and policy makers for schools, rather than conveners of citizens in deliberative processes, school officials impeded the development of social capital and negatively impacted school performance. Putnam (2001) argued that “. . . the most important correlate of educational outcomes is social capital at the community level” (p. 72).

In a study on the role of social capital in public schools, Parmelee (2006) found that social capital supported schools in a variety of ways, particularly in challenging funding and political environments. By undertaking the difficult work to revitalize the relationship with citizens, Shirley (2000) found that schools evolved into “vibrant centers of civic activism and academic achievement” (pp. 105-106). Putnam’s (2000) findings positively correlated educational performance with higher levels of social capital, and improved social capital was found to contribute to systematically sustained school improvement (Stone, Henig, Jones, & Pierannunzi, 2001).

Rosell and Gantwerk (2010) argued that the interconnected nature of today’s world made it imperative that leaders across all sectors promoted citizen participation in solving shared problems. According to Fusarelli (2011), it was the moral imperative of leaders to engage the public. Yankelovich and Friedman (2010) reported that this was underway: “An entire movement is taking shape in academia, local government, and the non-profit sector that is dedicated to developing the tools, strategies, and know-how to promote greater public understanding and engagement” (p. 6).

Conflict

Fischer (2009) stated “From the dialectical perspective, it is the clash of ideas that leads people to a deeper and potentially more enduring consensus, although the path to

success is generally longer and more time consuming” (p. 127). Fung (2004) described potentially conflictual encounters as opportunities for citizens to understand each other more fully and know where their motives and values overlapped. Leaders who promoted participatory processes learned to become comfortable with conflict and acquired skills to effectively work through difficult conversations to find common points of interest, agreement, or acceptance (Yankelovich & Friedman, 2010).

Current media trends were shown to exacerbate the divisions among individuals and groups by promoting partisan content that omitted varied points of view (Yankelovich et al., 2010). Citizens often chose to limit their exposure to opposing viewpoints by self-selecting the information that was most congenial to their existing perspectives. “In the current media landscape it is simply harder to reach those who do not already agree with you” (Yankelovich et al., 2010, p. 21). Fishkin (2009) argued that, instead of becoming broadly informed about an issue and exposed to others’ opinions, citizens were more likely to be exposed to people who shared the same opinions as their own. The expansion of online communications, social media tools, and other technology advances may be exacerbating divisions among citizens with opposing political identifications (Bishop, 2005).

Warren and Pearce (2008) stated that deliberative processes, particularly in times of conflict, produced better results and were likely to be “more legitimate, more reasonable, more informed, and more politically viable” (p. 272). Differences of opinion among participants were not eliminated, but a better understanding of those differences could be accomplished (Yankelovich & Friedman, 2010). According to Rosell and Gantwerk (2010):

Too often today conversations about public issues take place only among groups of the like-minded. These narrower conversations tend to reinforce polarization of different groups, increase the stereotyping of “others”—those who hold different views and make assumptions—and limit learning. In a dialogue, by contrast (and unlike a negotiation), the more diverse the perspectives of the participants, the richer the learning and the more productive the outcome. (p. 127)

When given the opportunity to deliberate on complex issues, citizens transcended their personal priorities and formulated perspectives that best served the community.

Rosell and Gantwerk (2010) found

. . . when citizens are given an opportunity to look at the bigger picture, to connect the dots, and to engage in a dialogue with others from very different backgrounds and perspectives, they think and act more like citizens and less like consumers, they develop a shared community perspective, and they are ready to make and support big changes to advance the common good. (p. 127)

Yankelovich and Friedman (2010) referred to the phase of dialoguing among individuals and groups with different perspectives as Stage II of a three-stage resolution process. Stage II could be highly emotional, which was normal and valuable. “Not only are emotions not a hindrance to judgment, but sophisticated brain research shows that you can’t reach sound judgment without them” (Yankelovich & Friedman, 2010, p. 27). However, individuals in our society lacked skills in this “working through” stage, even though we had greater facility with Stage I (consciousness raising) and Stage III (resolution). Since public participation seldom occurred spontaneously and had to be organized and facilitated by members of the involved institution, attention to quality was critical (Fishkin, 2009) and carried a moral imperative. In the words of Forester (2009), “No natural process guarantees that diverse voices will respect or even inform one another instead of becoming just so much shouting and noise, or worse” (p. 20).

Top-Down Reform

Under the direction of the United States Secretary of Education, The National Commission on Excellence in Education published, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform* in 1983. This widely read document concerned the declining ability of the public education system to prepare students for work, and the need to reestablish the United States as a world leader in education through improvements in the areas of content, standards and expectations, increased class time, teaching and leadership, and fiscal support. State and federal government administrators had the primary responsibilities of financing, governing, supporting, and promoting the interests of education. The report's authors recommended that, ". . . citizens across the nation hold educators and elected officials responsible for providing the leadership necessary to achieve these reforms, and that citizens provide the fiscal support and stability to bring about the reforms we propose" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 32). There were only two references to parental responsibility in the report: to actively engage in their children's studies and as potential funding sources for education. However, school principals and district superintendents were encouraged to be leaders in "persuasion, setting goals, and developing community consensus" (p. 32). Nowhere in this landmark document—dedicated to reforming America's public schools—were citizens encouraged to actively participate in collaborative planning, problem solving, or decision making. Also absent was any mandate for public education leaders to proactively engage citizens in policy making (A Nation at Risk, 1983).

Bauman (1996) characterized *A Nation at Risk* as the symbol of "top-down, policy-driven reforms" (p. 49) that served to further consolidate bureaucratic control of

public education among school officials and experts. A number of regressive consequences can be attributed to top-down education reform policies that did not invite public participation, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Education Reforms and Consequences for Citizen Engagement in Public Schools

Bureaucratic Reforms	Impact to Public Participation
Increased state and federal involvement and control of public schools.	Decreased citizen involvement and control in public schools.
Decreased number of districts nationwide due to consolidation.	Decreased number of elected school board representatives.
Increased professionalization requirements for teachers and administrators.	Increased reliance on educational professionals and experts and decreased reliance on citizen participation in school affairs.
Increased intervention of government and courts in problem solving and policymaking.	Decreased social capital and decreased capacity of citizens to effectively participate in deliberative processes and problem solving.

Public Participation

Positive correlations between citizen participation in schools and favorable outcomes were found in the literature, including: higher student achievement (Rice et al., 2000), better solutions to shared problems (Fung, 2004), higher levels of stakeholder agreement with solutions and trust in educational leaders (Langsdorf, 2003), and an increased ability to avoid polarization, reactionary decision making, and to comprehend the needs and perspectives of other community members (Yankelovich, 1991). Rather than viewing citizen engagement as hostile to their expertise (Kelban, 1981), officials should actively convene and work with citizens to solve problems (Gurke, 2008).

Multiple Publics

School officials strengthened the community's social capital by engaging varied groups in deliberative processes to build trust and obtain valuable information that led to productive change (Mathews, 2006). Much good has come from individuals and groups seeking changes to the status quo, as exemplified by the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Primary and secondary parents, business owners, corporate leaders, senior citizens, religious groups, and taxpayers had different values and needs concerning public education (Brouwer, 2006). Individuals in these groups, sometimes referred to as counterpublics, have challenged school administrators when their interests and needs were not being addressed, and their input should be part of the public conversation (Gurke, 2008).

An important skill that school officials must develop, particularly when working with diverse groups of citizens is the ability to look beyond people's positions and attempt to identify their interests. While positions tend to isolate individuals and groups, putting them in opposition to others, interests can often serve to move the discussion to another level and alleviate polarization and conflict.

Getting past the blinding presumptions that all parties can bring to complex and contentious disputes is certainly not easy. Especially when deep value differences might be at stake, careful and sensitive listening becomes more important and perhaps more difficult than ever. With all the best intentions, parties may be more focused on the issues that concern them than on the underlying interests they wish to satisfy (Forester, 2009, p. 87).

Dissenting Opinions

Fraser (1982) emphasized the historical and cultural barriers that prevented certain individuals and groups from participating in public debate; Phillips (1996) questioned the capacity of racial minorities and the poor to participate meaningfully in

education policymaking, given their lack of expert knowledge and professional training. For other researchers, the form of public proceedings was thought to hinder citizen participation. Hicks (2002) suggested that parliamentary procedures were a barrier to those who unfamiliar with that mode of social discourse. Tracy and Dimock (2004) argued that formal rules were restrictive to individuals and groups. Other critics of public participation included Hauser (1999), who questioned the negative impact that irrational behavior by citizens had on the process, and Stone (2002), who doubted that public participation could reach a fair balance of costs and benefits to private and public interests. Finally, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) found that some individuals withdrew from deliberative processes based on their perception of special interests.

Similar to Dewey (1916), who encouraged citizens to address the shortcomings of democracy with more democracy, Gurke (2008) said this about public participation: “Illustrating the shortcomings of the public sphere does not mean that we should abandon public sphere practices. Instead, understanding these problems provides an opportunity for developing procedures that might mitigate the shortcomings” (p. 29). Gurke (2008) urged practitioners not to substitute the quantity of deliberative processes for quality. Fischer (2009) emphasized that without careful planning, efforts at public participation nearly always fail, “...and the failure only offers critics of participation ammunition to suggest the foolishness of the commitment” (p. 100).

The inclusion of disparate opinions, perspectives, and interests was, however, thought to be fundamental to success:

Where debate is competitive and spectatorial, deliberation is collaborative and focuses on solving shared problems. As such, it assumes that many people have many pieces of the answer, and it is fundamentally about listening to understand

different points of view and discovering new options for solving a problem. (Yankelovich & Friedman, 2010, p. 105)

Building Public Participation

Mathews (2006) stated that data-driven accountability measures were not enough to satisfy the public; such data- and government-required reporting “leaves citizens feeling on the outside trying to look in” (p. 16). Citizens wanted face-to-face exchanges with educators and full accounts of what was happening in classrooms, on the playgrounds, in board meetings, and in the legislature (Mathews, 2006). Kernan-Schloss and Plattner (1998) emphasized the importance of developing an informed cohort of individuals who could effectively speak about school district issues. McDermott (1999) discussed the importance of citizen engagement strategies that went beyond the PTA, a parental role that traditionally supported the goals of the school leadership, and was largely disconnected from administrative leaders, elected officials, and policymaking. McDermott (1999) challenged school districts to cultivate stakeholder engagement in governance by developing their capabilities in that area.

Research Focus

Americans are withdrawing from politics and public life in greater numbers (Harwood, 2005). Researchers have suggested that the centralization, bureaucratization, and regulation of public education throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century has alienated citizens from public education and reduced their participation in school affairs. Research indicated that a high level of stakeholder engagement improved student achievement (Rice et al., 2000), achieved better solutions to shared problems in schools (Fung, 2004), and improved stakeholder support and trust (Langsdorf, 2003). However, no research was available regarding best practices to inform education leaders about how

to effectively engage citizens to become influential participants in policymaking, given the current environment of highly regulated, expert-dominated public school districts.

Yankelovich and Friedman (2010) suggested community-based action research was needed that engaged citizens in emerging issues relevant to their world. Also needed were systemic, longitudinal case studies that investigated how citizens formulated their opinions and perspectives on issues and cultivated relationships with community leaders.

This study was conducted using mixed methods case study to discover if a citizen training program that provided extensive knowledge about school district operations and management and relationship building opportunities with key decision makers was an effective tool to increase public participation in a public school district.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

A democracy in which we all had substantive information would seem to take too many meetings.

James Fishkin

Shared understanding means that the stakeholders understand each other's positions well enough to have intelligent dialogue about their different interpretations of the problem, and to exercise collective intelligence about how to solve it.

Jeff Conklin

The focus of this study was public participation in public school affairs and, specifically, this hypothesis: a training that provides citizens knowledge about the operations and management of the school district (know-how) and relationship building opportunities with key decision makers (know-who) is an effective tool for increasing public participation in public schools.

According to training materials provided by the International Association of Public Participation (2006), the central tenet of public participation was the right to take part in decisions that impacted our own lives. Research indicated that increased citizen participation in public schools was linked with significantly positive outcomes (Fung, 2004; Langsdorf, 2003; Rice et al., 2000); however, this active participation has steadily declined since the 1950s (Putnam, 2000). To participate effectively in school affairs, citizens must have a working knowledge of district operations and relationships with school officials (Mathews, 2006).

This mixed-methods case study examined the experiences of two cohorts of citizens who participated in one of two, eight-month training programs designed and implemented by this researcher. The researcher and a citizen of SVVSD conducted these trainings over the course of two school years, 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. The first year

cohort included 16 citizens; the second year cohort included 26 citizens. The program, called Leadership St. Vrain (LSV), was advertised widely across the district via printed newsletters, website announcements, newspaper articles, and announcements at Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings. Citizens interested in gaining detailed operational knowledge about the school district in regards to curriculum, finance, safety and security, state and federal education law, and governance were encouraged to participate. While having children enrolled in SVVSD was not a prerequisite for participation, all the participants in both cohorts had children currently attending schools in the district. Every citizen who expressed interest in the training program was admitted. (see Appendix A for description of SVVSD).

The LSV training program was developed collaboratively by myself—the Executive Director of Organizational Development and Communications at SVVSD—and a citizen who was concerned about parent involvement in our schools. LSV was designed to achieve three primary goals:

1. To equip citizens with in-depth knowledge about the operations and management of SVVSD.
2. To promote relationships between SVVSD citizens and key decision makers such as the superintendent, district leadership team professionals, board members, and appointed and elected officials at the state level.
3. To increase public participation in SVVSD by providing citizens detailed information about district operations and relationship building opportunities with the key decision makers.

The agenda for each of the ten meetings during the two school years under study included a superintendent's update at each meeting (with question and answer opportunities), presentations by one or two speakers (also with question and answer opportunities), and time for large group discussions. In addition to the superintendent, the speaker(s) included appointed and elected officials at the local and state levels. Citizen participants were encouraged to attend as many of the ten meetings as possible, and to share the information and discussion topics with other citizens, especially friends and acquaintances at their home schools or at school PTO meetings.

The purpose of this study was to examine the following research questions:

- 1 What knowledge did participants gain from the LSV training?
- 2 Did the LSV training lead to enhanced relationships between the participants and key decision makers?
- 3 Did participants report an increased willingness to be involved in education-related activities from the LSV training?
- 4 Did participants' efficacy in collaborative problem solving increase from the LSV training?
- 5 What new education-related actions did participants perform after their involvement in the LSV training?
- 6 Has the LSV training had a secondary or "ripple" effect impacting other citizens, schools, or the greater community?

This study was based on the concept—often attributed to American social philosopher, John Dewey (1927)—that vibrant citizen engagement in public institutions resulted in broader stakeholder representation and stronger institutional accountability.

The three-phased mixed methods design included a survey instrument specifically developed to determine the outcomes following the LSV program, which was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data during Phase 1. During Phase 2, this quantitative data was used for two primary purposes: a) to explore the hypothesis that organizational trainings that included operational knowledge (know-how) and relationship building (know-who) were effective tools for increasing public participation in a public school district, and b) to further inform qualitative follow-up interviews (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann and Hanson, 2003).

The following sections in this chapter include a description and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative design included in Phase 1 (research design, population and sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and validity and reliability details), and the qualitative design included in Phase 2 (rationale, assumptions, design types, researcher role, site selection, data sources, data collection techniques, recording and managing data, data analysis procedures, methods to ensure trustworthiness, and the study's qualitative limitations). The same two-phase mixed methods process was repeated with a secondary population, PTO presidents from district schools, to capture and examine data to add to the primary findings and explain more fully if and how the LSV training increased public participation in problem solving and decision making processes at the school level. In Phase 3 of this study, the researcher conducted an analysis of supplemental data—school records, PTO meeting minutes, school newsletters, and newspaper clippings—to add validity to study findings through data triangulation (Creswell, 2009) and convergence (Stringfield & Teddlie, 1991). Specifically, supplementary archival data were examined to understand how the LSV

training resulted in possible secondary effects, such as information sharing and network building, throughout the district and community.

Phase 1: Quantitative Design

This study included two citizen populations. The LSV group was selected from the 45 citizens who were members of two cohorts of the 10-session training programs. The PTO group was selected from the approximately 40 PTO presidents from district schools who served their term over the course of one or, in some cases, two academic years. The vast majority of these individuals did not participate as members of the LSV group while serving as PTO president, although some participated in both.

Purposeful Samples

The LSV group and PTO group represented purposeful samples. Citizens who signed up for LSV, but had poor attendance (i.e., dropped out after one or two meetings) were not included in the LSV group. Participants in both samples were local residents with children enrolled in SVVSD schools at the time of the training program.

The selection of participants for follow-up interviews was based on comments the LSV and PTO participants provided in written survey responses collected in Phase 1 that offered greater insight into key training criteria. The LSV group participants had included open-ended comments about increased knowledge about the school system (curriculum, school finance, governance, departments), effective communication practices (collaborative problem solving, making difficult choices and trade-offs, and valuing the opinions of others), and improved relationships with key decision makers (other citizens, administrators, elected officials). The PTO group participants included open-ended comments about receiving valuable district information attributed to the LSV training, the

impact of the LSV training on their PTO or school, and having LSV member updates at the PTO meetings. The researcher used any other survey data that provided greater insight into the strengths and/or weaknesses of the LSV training in the selection of subjects for follow-up interviews.

The first cohort of 16 citizens completed the LSV training in April, 2010 and the second cohort of 26 citizens completed the training in April, 2011. The PTO group sample consisted of 46 PTO presidents from the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 academic years. The rationale for using a purposeful sample for this research was that the LSV program was a new and pilot initiative (Patton, 2002).

LSV Instrument

The LSV instrument was designed as a single-point-in-time report to obtain descriptive and predictive data about seven domains: knowledge, relationship, willingness, efficacy, actions, and evaluation of training modules and overall LSV training. This instrument was specifically developed after an extensive review of the literature, in which no reports of a similar training program were found. While public participation was not new, training for citizens that included detailed information about the operations and management of the school district (know-how), coupled with opportunities to establish personal relationships with key decision makers (know-who), was an innovative concept in public education. Therefore, an instrument designed specifically about the LSV training was needed to obtain data relevant to measuring and describing how the combination of know-how and know-who affected public participation.

LSV Field Testing

The LSV instrument was designed to solicit participants' perceptions in response to broad descriptive comments about the outcomes of the LSV training.

The web-based LSV instrument was field tested for validity with approximately 20 individuals, in three major phases, over the course of one year. These people were asked to provide feedback on their experience accessing, navigating, and completing the instrument. Feedback from the initial field test resulted in numerous corrections and modifications designed to improve the validity, clarity, and usability of the instrument, including the following:

1. Added three additional domains: willingness, efficacy, and action. The original instrument only included items regarding participant knowledge and relationships.
2. Aligned the items in each domain with the domain topic
3. Arranged the items within the domain starting with those involving the local level first, followed by the district level, and ending with the state level to improve participant understanding.
4. Standardized items as statements rather than questions.
5. Standardized the majority of responses to a 5-point Likert scale. This change was intended to facilitate readability and decrease confusion in the response process.
6. Doubled the number of items in Section 6 (action domain) to more thoroughly explore behaviors that might be attributed to LSV, especially in regard to financial contributions and social media.

7. Increased the number of items designed to obtain evaluative information about individual LSV training modules. The items in this section evolved from a general evaluation of the training to specific activities that were repeated in both cohort years.
8. Included items to obtain demographic data about the respondents' gender, cohort group, and how they learned about the training.
9. Included an open-ended comment option in each section (7 total) to capture information the respondent felt motivated to share.
10. Included "question logic" that allowed all respondent to complete the survey without disclosing their identify, then provided a separate section for respondents who agreed to participate in a follow-up interview.

During the first round of testing, the length of the LSV group instrument increased from 25 items to 52 items. Due to the small number of participants and the strength of their affiliation with SVVSD and their LSV training cohort, it was felt that participants would be willing to take the time needed to complete the survey despite its length. As an example of the substantive changes, listed in Table 2 are the additional survey items added to the LSV instrument as the efficacy domain. The full LSV instrument is provided in Appendix B.

Table 2

Items Added as the Efficacy Domain Based on Field Tests

Item #	To some degree, it is because of my experience with LSV that:
19	I know that finding solutions to school district-related challenges frequently require making very difficult choices.
20	I have a greater understanding of parents whose perspectives about education-related issues are different from mine.
21	I believe that if parents with different perspectives are involved in solving district-related challenges, we'll get better resolutions.
22	Even though another parent might have a completely different position than mine about an education-related issue, I believe we could reach a consensus.
23	I understand that finding solutions to controversial problems frequently means having uncomfortable conversations with people that I disagree with.

The LSV instrument was tested a second time for internal reliability to ensure that all 12 sections and 52 items were consistent and avoided confusion for the participants. This test was conducted with a group of district officials and citizens who had attended various training meetings and were familiar with the content and intent of LSV. Participants in this second round of testing were asked to make notes regarding any instances of clarity, confusion, or misunderstanding, they experienced while completing the survey. To strengthen reliability, specific probing questions included: Were the survey questions clear and congruent with the training goals? Were the training

constructs of knowledge and relationship building clearly communicated in the survey (Miles & Huberman, 1994)? In addition to performing an extensive peer review of the instrument, close attention was given to the interpretation of the survey items by different groups of respondents. Feedback included handwritten notes provided to the researcher. Participating district officials and citizens were subsequently interviewed to gain additional impressions and clarifications.

A third round of field tests and subsequent revisions were conducted, and additional revisions and additions were made based on the comments of Carole Makela, Ph.D., from the CSU School of Education, and Martin Carcasson, Ph.D., Director of the Center for Public Deliberation, and a nationally respected scholar in the field of public participation. The combined critical assistance of Drs. Makela and Carcasson was central to the design of the LSV group instrument and they each gave final approval for its use in this research. None of the LSV instrument reviewers were solicited as respondents to the survey. In Table 3, a description of each of the domain categories in the instrument used for LSV group participants is provided.

Table 3

Domain Categories in the LSV Instrument

Domain Name	Domain Categories	Items*	Statement Type/Scale
Knowledge	Increased knowledge (new information the participant learned in LSV)	1 – 5	5-point Likert scale: strongly agree to strongly disagree
Relationship	Increased relationship (newly established relationships between participant and key influencers)	7 – 11	5-point Likert scale: strongly agree to strongly disagree
Willingness	Increased willingness (new involvement activities with the school district)	13 – 17	5-point Likert scale: strongly agree to strongly disagree
Efficacy	Increased efficacy for public participation (newly acquired public participation skills)	19 – 23	5-point Likert scale: strongly agree to strongly disagree
Action	Increased action (specific actions by participant taken for the first time)	25 - 34	Yes/No
Evaluation of LSV	Evaluation of training modules (participant ratings of individual training modules)	36 – 40	5-point Likert scale: strongly agree to strongly disagree
LSV Experience	Evaluation of training (participant overall ratings of training program)	42 – 46	5-point Likert scale: strongly agree to strongly disagree
Demographics	Demographic data (participant gender, cohort identification and how he/she learned about LSV training)	48 – 50	Multiple choice

LSV Data Collection

The LSV instrument was administered in an electronic format delivered to the study participants by email. Of the 52 items, 44 required a single click to indicate the desired response option. While responding to the survey, participants had the option of returning to previous pages to change or add a response. However, they could not move forward through subsequent pages without completing responses on the current page. The responses were tallied automatically using Qualtrics survey software. SPSS statistical analysis software was used to determine alphas to evaluate the internal consistency of the 40 items that had three or more Likert scale values (Huck & Cormier, 1996).

The final LSV instrument is provided in Appendix B, and included the following sections:

Section 1. Survey Directions: The following directions were provided at the beginning of the survey:

This survey is designed to obtain valuable information about your experience in Leadership St. Vrain (LSV). Please respond to the following items by first reading the statement then clicking on the response that best reflects your experience. The survey should not take more than 15-20 minutes. Your feedback is very important. Thank you for taking time to complete this survey.

Section 2. Knowledge Domain (items 1-6): Items 1-5 referred to the knowledge participants gained as a result of the LSV training. The items specifically referred to improved knowledge about the district's organizational structure, instructional programs, policies and practices, school board role, and state role in school funding. A five-point Likert scale—with options from strongly agree to strongly disagree—was listed vertically for each item, and the desired response was selected by clicking a radio button next to the

chosen option. A field was provided for item 6 in which respondents could enter an open-ended written response to the topics mentioned in Section 2.

Section 3. Relationship (items 7-12): Items 7-11 referred to relationship-building opportunities made available throughout the LSV training program, specifically the increased likelihood that, as a result of the training, the citizens would contact friends and acquaintances about education issues, be contacted by friends and acquaintances, or contact the superintendent, board members, and/or state-level elected officials. A five-point Likert scale—with options from strongly agree to strongly disagree—was listed vertically for each item, and the desired response was selected by clicking a radio button next to the chosen option. A field was provided for item 7 in which respondents could enter an open-ended written response to the topics mentioned in Section 3.

Section 4. Willingness (items 13-18): Items 13-17 referred to various forms of routine participation in education-related issues, including informal conversations with acquaintances, PTO meetings, board of education meetings, legislative hearings, and seeking a leadership position on a school or district-related committee. A five-point Likert scale—with options from strongly agree to strongly disagree—was listed vertically for each item, and the desired response was selected by clicking a radio button next to the chosen option. A field was provided for item 18 in which respondents could enter an open-ended written response to the topics mentioned in Section 4.

Section 5. Efficacy (items 19-24): Items 19-23 referred to public participation skills, specifically about skill acquisition from the LSV training, including understanding that difficult decisions frequently required tough choices, understanding citizens with different perspectives, engaging people with diverse perspectives to solve problems,

accepting that because some people think differently they did not have bad intentions, and finding solutions to controversial problems frequently meant having tough conversations. A five-point Likert scale—with options from strongly agree to strongly disagree—was listed vertically for each item, and the desired response was selected by clicking a radio button next to the chosen option. A field was provided for item 24 in which respondents could enter an open-ended written response to the topics mentioned in Section 5.

Section 6. Actions (items 25-35): This section included 10 items to investigate first-time actions taken by participants based on the school district-related information they had learned in the LSV training, including sharing information with their PTO, sharing information on social media, submitting a letter to the editor of a local newspaper, working on a state legislative initiative, communicating with the superintendent or board member, volunteering at a district event, making a financial contribution, asking another citizen or community member to participate in a community event or to make a financial donation, and supporting the campaign of a candidate. The response was yes/no for each item.

Section 7. Evaluation of LSV Training Modules (items 36-41): Items 36-40 were intended to gauge participant response to specific activities in the LSV program, including presentations by the superintendent, school board president, district department directors, state elected and appointed officials, and the opportunity provided to meet citizen representatives from other schools. A five-point Likert scale—with options from strongly agree to strongly disagree—was listed vertically for each item, and the desired response was selected by clicking a radio button next to the chosen option. A field was

provided for item 41 in which respondents could enter an open-ended written response to the topics mentioned in Section 7.

Section 8: Evaluation of Overall LSV Training Program (items 42-47): Items 42-46 referred to the participant's overall LSV training experience, including the degree to which the training increased their knowledge about district operations, expanded their relationships with local and state education officials, strengthened their problem-solving skills in education-related issues, and whether the participant would recommend the training program to a friend or acquaintance. A five-point Likert scale—with options from strongly agree to strongly disagree—was listed vertically for each item, and the desired response was selected by clicking a radio button next to the chosen option. A field was provided for item 47 in which respondents could enter an open-ended written response to the topics mentioned in Section 8.

Section 9. Participant Information: Items 48-50 included questions to obtain demographic information about the participant, including their gender, cohort (2009-2010 or 2010-2011), and how the participant learned about the training. Appropriate multiple-choice answers were provided as options.

Section 10. Interview Participation (item 51): In item 51, participants were asked whether they would be willing to share additional information about their LSV training experience in a follow-up interview. The response options were yes/no. If the response was no, the next screen shown was Section 11. If the response was yes, the next screen shown was Section 12.

Sections 11. Statement for participants declining the request for a follow-up interview: Thank you for completing this survey. Your answers will remain completely confidential.

Section 12. Item 52 was a statement for participants agreeing to the request for a follow-up interview: Please provide your name, your best phone number(s), and a current email address. All information, including personal contact information, is strictly confidential and will not be shared. Appropriate fields were provided for responses.

LSV Data Analysis

The responses to the LSV instrument were coded in SPSS using a scoring system that assigned a numerical value to each response, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Codes Assigned to Responses on LSV Instrument

Domains Measuring Public Participation	Response Options	Code
Knowledge (5 items)	Strongly agree	5
Relationship (5 items)	Agree	4
Willingness (5 items)	Neither agree nor disagree	3
Efficacy (5 items)	Disagree	2
	Strongly disagree	1
Action (10 items)	Yes	1
	No	2
Open-ended questions	Written responses	

The response values for the LSV instrument were used to determine overall group response scores and cohort scores for each of the capacity building domains: knowledge (D1), relationship (D2), willingness (D3), efficacy (D4), and action (D5). They were also used to calculate the means (M), standard deviations (SD), cohort response means (M^a), t test value (t), p values (p), and mean differences (M Dif.) for the purpose of determining whether differences existed between the items for both cohorts. Due to a sufficient response to the LSV instrument from both cohorts, the data are discussed in Chapter 4 as both combined cohorts and separate cohorts.

To determine an overall score for all participants for the inter-correlations of the capacity building domains of knowledge, relationship, willingness, efficacy, and action, Pearson's Rho (r) correlation was calculated.

To determine cohort scores for evaluation for LSV training modules (E1) and overall training (E2) scores, the response percentages (%) were calculated for means (M), standard deviations (SD), and the cohort response means (M^a), t test value (t), p value (p), and mean differences (M Dif.), to determine whether differences existed between the domain scores for the two cohorts.

All open-ended responses were recorded and coded (Strauss, 1987) to gain greater insight into respondents' awareness and perception of LSV. A provisional start-list of themes for coding included: (a) knowledge of organization, instruction, policies, finance, governance; (b) relationship-building activities (e.g., meeting or contacting citizens, school administrators, and elected officials about school-related issues); (c) participation (e.g., attending PTO and board meetings and seeking leadership positions); (d) knowledge of public participation skills (e.g., making difficult choices, respecting the opinions of others, engaging different citizens in problem solving and decision making); and (e) new activities participants have engaged in subsequent to the LSV training. The themes were evaluated for topics to be addressed in follow-up interviews with participants.

Of the respondents who volunteered, 10 follow-up interviews were scheduled and conducted with participants.

PTO Instrument

A second survey instrument was designed to obtain general information from school PTO presidents across SVVSD. The intent of this instrument was to learn if the district-level LSV training reached individuals and organizations at the school level. It was hypothesized that citizens who volunteered as PTO presidents, and their organizations, were indirect recipients of the LSV outcomes, extending the impact of the LSV training to a wider circle of potential influence. Additionally, PTO presidents were thought to be a source of additional insights regarding public participation beyond the LSV training program. In the majority of schools, PTO presidents did not participate in the LSV training, although some participated in both.

Items 1-10 on the PTO instrument (see Appendix C) referred to the respondents' awareness and perception concerning LSV, and the available response format was yes/unsure/no. Item 11 provided a field for an open-ended response. In items 12 through 14, the participant was asked to identify his or her gender, the school year (i.e., 2009-2010 and/or 2010-2011) in which she or he was president, and if she/he was willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

PTO Field Testing

The PTO instrument was tested for validity and reliability using the same process used for the LSV group instrument. Because the PTO instrument was designed after the LSV instrument, most of the design flaws were avoided in the original. One major modification was the addition of Item 10, which provided space for an open-ended response.

PTO Data Collection

Approximately 45 PTO presidents, from the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 academic years, were asked to complete the web-based PTO instrument.

PTO Data Analysis

To quantify the impact of the LSV training on school PTOs, a numeric value was assigned to the yes/unsure/no responses to items 1-10 of the PTO group Instrument (i.e., 1 for yes, 2 for unsure, 3 for no). Qualtrics survey software tallied the responses automatically and, using SPSS, alpha was used to evaluate internal consistency of the 10 items (Huck & Cormier, 1996).

To determine the impact of the LSV training on participants of the 2009-2010 or 2010-2011 PTO cohorts, the researcher calculated the response percentages (%), means (M), standard deviations (SD), the cohort response means (M^a), *t* test values (*t*), *p* values (*p*), and mean differences (M Dif.) for the purpose of determining whether differences existed between the item scores for cohorts. Due to a sufficient response to the PTO instrument from both cohorts, the data are discussed in Chapter 4 as both separate cohorts and in total.

All the written responses were recorded and coded to gain greater insight into the level of the respondents' awareness and perception of LSV and were evaluated for topics to address in follow-up interviews. After identifying the respondents who agreed to be interviewed, five follow-up interviews were scheduled with participants.

Phase 2: Qualitative Design

Phase 1 of this study was designed to provide quantitative data to inform Phase 2, in which interviews were conducted with two groups: LSV training participants and PTO presidents.

The researcher conducted 10 face-to-face interviews from LSV group participants (see Appendix D for interview consent forms and Appendix E for interview question guides), and five face-to-face interviews with the PTO group participants (see Appendix F for interview question guides). The interviews were conducted using a combination of think-aloud and verbal probing interview techniques. To minimize researcher bias, the think-aloud techniques were used to obtain greater detail about participants' quantitative survey responses; verbal probing was used to delve more deeply into their open-ended written survey responses.

All appropriate cautions were taken to protect the confidentiality of the respondents. Fictitious names were assigned to each interview record, and the original recordings were destroyed upon transcription of the data. Once transcribed, the data were evaluated and categorized using Microsoft Excel software.

Phase 3: Review of Supplementary Materials

In Phase 3 of this study, I conducted an analysis of supplemental data including school records, PTO meeting minutes, school newsletters, and newspaper clippings, with the goal of adding validity to study findings through data triangulation (Creswell, 2009) and convergence (Stringfield & Teddlie, 1991). Supplementary documents were identified to provide an additional source of data (Willis, 2007) and additional insights into what impact, if any, the LSV parent group training had on public participation in

SVVSD. The supplementary documents (referenced by participants during follow-up interviews) for review and analysis were materials published in area newspapers such as letters to the editor or guest opinions, PTO meeting minutes, campaign and election-related materials, and social media materials, such as blog posts and website content. Only data that could be interpreted in terms of meaningful categories, including the domains of knowledge, relationship, willingness, efficacy, and action, were used (Yin, 1994).

Delimitations

This study was conducted in Colorado's 9th largest school district with a small purposeful sample of citizen participants. While SVVSD had more than 50 schools, some did not have a citizen representative in LSV and not all schools had PTO organizations. A further limitation was the demographic representation of citizen participants in the LSV training and among PTO presidents. Although the researcher did not collect detailed demographic data from the respondents, it was known that both the LSV training and PTO presidents included few minority and male gendered citizens. Nonetheless, this case study was designed to explore the citizen engagement in public schools and to obtain greater insights into the underlying dynamics and outcomes of specially designed training on citizen participation in school-related business.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

As long as people have access and can meet the people or be involved, I think the trust becomes more palpable. They can touch it. They can see it. They can go call somebody.

Parent, Leadership St. Vrain

They don't want input and they don't want squeaky wheels: I think our district is different in that way.

Parent, Leadership St. Vrain

Phase 1: Quantitative Data Evaluation

A Qualtrics email survey (see Appendix B) was emailed to 42 participants in LSV training program. All of the participants were parents of children currently enrolled in one or more schools in SVVSD. Of the 42 adults to whom the survey was sent—using email addresses provided by SVVSD—27 agreed to take the survey. Cohort and gender frequencies of participants are shown in Table 5. One individual opened the survey but did not consent to participating. Of the 27 respondents, 12 identified as belonging to the 2009-2010 cohort (hereafter referred to as LSV 09-10), and 15 identified as belonging to the 2010-2011 cohort (hereafter referred to as LSV 10-11). Overall, the LSV survey had a 64% rate of response.

Table 5

Participant Cohort and Gender Frequencies

Cohort	N	Males	Females	Respondents
2009-2010	16	1	15	12
2010-2011	26	7	19	15
Total	42			27

The LSV survey addressed seven domains and included 40 items as shown in Table 3. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly agree, to 5 = strongly disagree was provided for 30 items; a yes/unsure/no response was provided for 10 items.

Knowledge Domain

For the five items comprising the knowledge domain, respondents were asked to evaluate whether their knowledge of specific areas of the school district significantly improved as a result of the LSV training (see Table 6). The highest level of agreement was for “LSV has significantly improved my knowledge of the school district’s overall policies and practices,” with 97% marking either strongly agree or agree ($M = 1.63$). The lowest level of agreement was “LSV has significantly improved my knowledge of the school board’s role in the school district” for which approximately 80% of the respondents marked either strongly agree or agree ($M = 1.77$), with none who marked disagree or strongly disagree, and 19% who marked neither agree nor disagree.

Table 6

Knowledge Domain Responses with Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviations

LSV has significantly improved my knowledge of:	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Ag Nor Dis		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		M	SD
	%		%		%		%		%			
The school district's organization structure	17	63	8	30	2	7	0	0	0	0	1.44	.641
The school district's instructional programs	10	37	13	48	4	15	0	0	0	0	1.78	.698
The school district's overall policies and practices	11	41	15	56	1	4	0	0	0	0	1.63	.565
The school board's role in the school district	11	42	10	38	5	19	0	0	0	0	1.77	.765
The state of Colorado's role in school funding	15	59	9	33	2	7	0	0	0	0	1.48	.643

Response ranges. For the knowledge domain items, the strongly agree or agree responses ranged from 80% to 97%, and the neither agree nor disagree responses ranged from 4% to 19%. There were no disagree or strongly disagree responses to any of the knowledge domain items.

Other observations. In response to the survey item “LSV has significantly improved my knowledge of the school district’s organizational structure,” 93% of respondents marked strongly agree or agree, while 7% marked neither agree nor disagree.

The responses were essentially identical for the item “LSV has significantly improved my knowledge of the State of Colorado’s role in school funding,” for which 92% of respondents marked strongly agree or agree. In response to “LSV has significantly improved my knowledge of the school district’s instructional programs,” 85% of respondents marked either strongly agree or agree.

The 27 respondents who completed the LSV instrument were members of two cohorts: LSV 09-10 and LSV 10-11. An independent samples *t*-Test for the knowledge domain responses indicated no statistically significant differences for any of the five domain items (see Table 7).

Table 7

Knowledge Domain (alpha = .768), Descriptive Data, Cohort t-Test, and Pearson's Correlation

LSV has significantly improved my knowledge of:	N	M ^a	SD	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	M. Dif.	<i>r</i>
Organizational structure							
2009-2010	12	1.58	.793	.352	.957	.250	.19
2010-2011	15	1.33	.488				
Instructional programs							
2009-2010	12	2.00	.853	.142	1.516	.400	.27
2010-2011	15	1.60	.507				
Board of education role							
2009-2010	12	1.75	.866	.908	-.116	-.036	-.025
2010-2011	15	1.79	.699				
Policies and procedures							
2009-2010	12	1.67	.651	.767	.299	.067	.06
2010-2011	15	1.60	.507				
State's role in funding							
2009-2010	12	1.33	.651	.293	-1.074	-.267	-.20
2010-2011	15	1.60	.632				

The knowledge domain responses reflected overall agreement among the cohorts. The highest cohort response agreement was for “LSV has significantly increased my knowledge of the Board of Education’s role” with a mean of $M = 1.75$ for LSV 09-10 and a mean of $M = 1.79$ for LSV 10-11. The response consistency was attributed to the gain of knowledge for members of both cohorts about board governance practices. The lowest cohort response agreement was for “...knowledge of instructional programs” with a mean of $M = 2.00$ for LSV 09-10 and a mean of $M = 1.60$ for LSV 10-11.

Relationship Domain

For the five items included in the relationship domain, respondents were asked to evaluate their likelihood to engage with each of five stakeholders and education officials as a result of relationship building opportunities provided through the LSV training. This domain consisted of five items using the five Likert scale responses. The response frequency and percentage for each item in the relationship domain are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Relationship Domain Responses with Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviations

Because of relationship-building opportunities made available to me in LSV:	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Ag Nor Dis		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		M	SD
		%		%		%		%		%		
I am more likely to contact a friend of acquaintance about an education-related issue.	11	41	11	41	4	15	1	4	0	0	1.81	.834
Friends and acquaintances are more likely to contact me about an education-related issue.	12	44	10	37	4	15	1	4	0	0	1.78	.847
I am more likely to contact the superintendent about an education-related issue.	9	35	11	42	5	19	1	4	0	0	1.92	.845
I am more likely to contact a board member about an education-related issue	7	27	14	54	4	15	1	4	0	0	1.96	.774
I am more likely to contact a state legislator about an education-related issue.	4	15	14	52	6	22	3	11	0	0	2.30	.869

The highest level of agreement in the relationship domain responses was “...more likely to contact a friend or acquaintance about an education-related issue,” to which 82% marked strongly agree or agree ($M = 1.81$), 15% marked neither agree nor disagree, and 4% marked disagree. The lowest level of agreement was for “...more likely to contact a state legislator about an education-related issue.” For this item, 67% marked strongly agree or agree ($M = 2.30$), 22% marked neither agree nor disagree, and 11% marked disagree.

Other observations: Regarding “...friends and acquaintances are more likely to contact me about an education-related issue,” 81% marked the option for strongly agree or agree ($M = 1.78$), a result suggesting that other parents and stakeholders perceived the LSV participants to be reliable sources of knowledge about school district-related issues. In regard to the items about contacting an education official (superintendent, board member, or state legislator), 81% of respondents marked strongly agree or agree that they were most likely to contact a board member ($M = 1.96$); 71% marked strongly agree or agree that they were more likely to contact the superintendent ($M = 1.92$), and 67% marked strongly agree or agree that they were more likely to contact a state legislator ($M = 2.30$).

Standard deviations: The mean responses for the five items in the relationship domain ranged from $M = 1.78$ for “Friends and acquaintances are more likely to contact me about an education-related issue,” to $M = 2.30$ for “...more likely to contact a state legislator about an education-related issue.”

An independent samples *t*-Test for the relationship domain responses indicated a statistically significant difference in one of the five domain items. The *t*-Test for item

“Because of relationship-building opportunities in LSV, I am more likely to contact a state legislator about an education-related issue” resulted in a statistically significant finding of $p = .008$ ($r = -.48$) as shown in Table 9. This result was attributed to stronger involvement in the mill levy override and bond election by respondents in the LSV 09-10 cohort, as well as their organized participation in a three controversial state ballot initiatives in Colorado concerning funding for public education and other publicly-funded services.

Table 9

Relationship Domain (alpha = .867) Descriptive Data, Cohort t-Test, and Pearson's

Correlation

Because of LSV relationship-building opportunities made available to me in LSV:	N	M ^a	SD	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	M Dif.	<i>r</i>
I am more likely to contact a state legislator about an education-related issue.							
2009-2010	12	1.83	.577	.008	-2.915	-.833	-.48
2010-2011	15	2.67	.900				
Friends or acquaintances are more likely to contact me about an education-related issue.							
2009-2010	12	1.67	.985	.553	-.602	-.200	-.11
2010-2011	15	1.87	.743				
I am more likely to contact a board of education member about an education-related issue.							
2009-2010	12	1.75	.622	.203	-1.309	-.393	-.25
2010-2011	14	2.14	.865				
I am more likely to contact the superintendent about an education-related issue.							
2009-2010	12	1.75	.754	.344	-.966	-.321	-.19
2010-2011	14	2.07	.917				
I am more likely to contact a friend or acquaintance about an education-related issue.							
2009-2010	12	2.00	.953	.311	1.034	.333	.19
2010-2011	15	1.67	.724				

Independent t-Tests for the remaining four items in the relationship domain did not indicate significant mean differences in cohort responses as shown in Table 9. The highest level of cohort response agreement among the cohorts was for "...more likely to be contacted by a friend or acquaintance about an education-related issue" with $M = 1.75$

for LSV 09-10, and $M = 2.07$ for LSV 10-11; and “...more likely to contact a friend or acquaintance about an education-related issue” with $M = 1.67$ for LSV 09-10, and $M = 1.87$ for LSV 10-11. The lowest level of cohort response agreement was for “...more likely to contact a state legislator about an education-related issue” with $M = 1.83$ for LSV 09-10 and $M = 2.67$ for LSV 10-11.

Willingness Domain

For the five items in the willingness domain, respondents were asked to evaluate their likelihood of participating in a variety of school-related activities as a result of the LSV training. The response frequency and percentage for each survey item in the willingness domain are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Willingness Domain Responses with Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviations

Because of my participation in LSV:	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Ag Nor Dis		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		M	SD
		%		%		%		%		%		
I am more likely to participate in informal conversations with others about education-related issues.	19	70	7	26	1	4	0	0	0	0	1.33	.555
I am more likely to participate at Parent Teacher Organization or other school committee meetings.	11	41	9	33	4	15	3	11	0	0	1.96	1.018
I am more likely to participate at board of education meetings.	3	11	14	52	7	26	3	11	0	0	2.37	.838
I am more likely to participate at legislative hearings at the state capitol.	0	0	15	56	9	33	3	11	0	0	2.56	.698
I am more likely to seek a leadership position on a school or district-related committee.	10	37	10	37	7	26	0	0	0	0	1.89	.801

The highest level of agreement in the willingness domain was for respondents being more likely to “participate in informal conversations with others about education-related issues” for which 96% marked strongly agree or agree (M = 1.33), 4% marked neither agree nor disagree, and none marked disagree. The lowest level of agreement was

for item "...more likely to participate at legislative hearings at the state capitol" for which 56% marked agree ($M = 2.56$), 33% marked neither agree nor disagree, 3% marked disagree, and none marking strongly disagree.

Other observations: Regarding the items "...more likely to participate at Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) or other school committee meetings" and "...more likely to seek a leadership position on a school or district-related committee," 74% marked strongly agree or agree they were more likely to participate because of the LSV training ($M = 1.89$). In fact, a higher percentage of respondents indicated a greater likelihood of seeking a leadership position on a school or district-related committee (74%) than participated at board of education meetings (63%, $M = 2.37$).

An independent samples t-Test for the willingness domain responses indicated a statistically significant difference in one of the five domain items: "Because of my participation with LSV I am more likely to participate in state legislative hearings at the state capitol," with $M = 2.25$ for LSV 09-10 and $M = 2.80$ for LSV 10-22, and a statistically significant mean response difference ($p = .039$; $r = -.39$) as shown in Table 11. Once again, respondents from the LSV 10-11 cohort indicated significantly higher ambivalence than those from the LSV 09-10 cohort. This result was attributed to stronger involvement in the mill levy override and bond election and their further participation in a 2010 state ballot initiative intended to increase funding for Colorado schools.

Table 11

Willingness Domain (alpha = .725) Descriptive Data, Cohort t-Test, and Pearson's

Correlation

Because of my participation with LSV: I am more likely to:	N	M ^a	SD	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	M Dif.	<i>r</i>
I am more likely to participate in informal conversations with others about education-related issues.							
2009-2010	12	1.50	.674	.194	1.351	.300	.26
2010-2011	15	1.20	.414				
I am more likely to seek a leadership position on a school or district-related committee.							
2009-2010	12	2.17	.718	.108	1.667	.500	.25
2010-2011	15	1.67	.816				
I am more likely to participate in state legislative hearings at the state capitol.							
2009-2010	12	2.25	.622	.039	-2.176	.550	-.052
2010-2011	15	2.80	.676				
I am more likely to participate at board of education meetings.							
2009-2010	12	2.42	.900	.803	.252	.083	-.39
2010-2011	15	2.33	.816				
I am more likely to participate in PTO or other school committee meetings.							
2009-2010	12	2.25	1.055	.196	1.329	.517	.31
2010-2011	15	1.73	.961				

Independent *t*-Tests for the remaining four items in the willingness domain did not indicate significant differences in mean cohort responses. The highest level of response agreement among the cohorts was found in, “Because of my participation in LSV I am more likely to participate in board of education meetings” was calculated at $M = 2.42$ for LSV 09-10, and $M = 2.33$ for LSV 10-11. The lowest level of response agreement among the cohorts was for, “...participate in state legislative hearings at the

capitol” with $M = 2.25$ for LSV 09-10 and $M = 2.80$ for LSV 10-11 as shown in Table 11.

Efficacy Domain

The five items in the efficacy domain were intended to evaluate whether the LSV training increased respondents’ ability to work with others, find consensus, and solve difficult problems. The response frequency and response percentage for each survey item in the efficacy domain are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Efficacy Domain Responses with Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviations

To some degree, it is from my experience with LSV that	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Ag Nor Dis		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		M	SD
		%		%		%		%		%		
I know that finding solutions to school district related challenges frequently requires making very difficult choices.	15	56	11	41	1	4	0	0	0	0	1.48	.580
I have a greater understanding of parents whose perspectives on education-related issues are different from mine.	5	19	19	70	3	11	3	11	0	0	1.93	.550
I believe that if parents with different perspectives are involved in solving school district-related challenges, we'll get better resolutions.	13	48	12	44	2	7	0	0	0	0	1.59	.636
I know even though another parent might have a completely different position from mine about an education-related issue, I believe we could reach a consensus.	4	15	19	70	4	15	0	0	0	0	2.00	.555
I understand that finding solutions to controversial problems frequently means having uncomfortable conversations with people I disagree with.	11	41	15	56	1	4	0	0	0	0	1.63	.565

The highest level of agreement in the efficacy domain was for "...I know that finding solutions to school-district related challenges frequently requires making very

difficult choices” ($M = 1.48$), and “...I understand that finding solutions to controversial problems frequently means having uncomfortable conversations with people I disagree with” ($M = 1.63$); 97% marked strongly agree and agree for both items. The lowest level of agreement was to “...I know that even though another parent might have a completely different position from mine about an education-related issue, I believe we could reach a consensus” with 85% who marked strongly agree or agree ($M = 2.00$), and 15% who marked neither agree nor disagree.

Other observations: In response to “...I believe that if parents with different perspectives are involved in solving school district-related challenges, we’ll get better resolutions,” 92% marked strongly agree or agree ($M = 1.59$), and 7% said neither agree nor disagree. In response to “...I have a greater understanding of parents whose perspectives on education-related issues are different from mine,” 89% marked strongly agree or agree ($M = 1.93$), and 11% marked neither agree nor disagree. No respondents marked disagree or strongly disagree to any of the items in the efficacy domain.

An independent samples *t*-Test for the five efficacy domain responses indicated no statistically significant differences in mean cohort responses for any of the five domain items. The highest level of cohort response agreement was for “Even though another parent might have a completely different opinion than mine about an education-related issue, I believe we could reach a consensus” with the mean response of $M = 2.00$ for both cohorts. The lowest level of cohort response agreement was for “I understand the finding solutions to difficult problems frequently means having uncomfortable conversations with people I disagree with:” the mean response for LSV 09-10 was $M = 1.42$ and for LSV 10-11 was $M = 1.80$ as shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Efficacy Domain (alpha = .606) Descriptive Data, Cohort t-Test and Pearson's

Correlation

To some degree, it is from my experience with LSV that:	N	M ^a	SD	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	M Dif.	<i>r</i>
I believe that if parents with different perspectives are involved in solving school district-related challenges, we'll get better resolutions.							
2009-2010	12	1.50	.533	.509	-.669	-.167	-.13
2010-2011	15	1.67	.724				
I know that finding solutions to school district-related challenges frequently requires making very difficult choices.							
2009-2010	12	1.50	.522	.885	.146	.033	.026
2010-2011	15	1.47	.640				
I understand that finding solutions to controversial problems frequently means having uncomfortable conversations with people that I disagree with.							
2009-2010	12	1.42	.515	.079	-1.830	-.383	-.33
2010-2011	15	1.80	.561				
Even though another parent might have a completely different position from mine about an education-related issue, I believe we could reach a consensus.							
2009-2010	12	2.00	.603	1.00	.000	.000	0
2010-2011	15	2.00	.535				
I have a greater understanding of parents whose perspectives on education-related issues are different from mine.							
2009-2010	12	2.00	.603	.542	.619	.133	.11
2010-2011	15	1.87	.516				

Action Domain

The 10 items included in the action domain were intended to investigate respondents' involvement in a variety of education-related activities after their LSV training, based on yes/no responses. The response frequency and percentage for each survey item in the action domain are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Action Domain Responses with Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviations

After getting involved in LSV I have done these things:	Yes	%	No	%	M	SD
Shared knowledge about school district-related information with my school PTO.	23	88	3	12	1.12	.326
Written about a school district-related issue on a blog, Facebook, Twitter, or another social media site.	18	69	8	31	1.31	.471
Submitted a letter to the editor of a local newspaper concerning a school district-related issue.	7	27	19	73	1.73	.452
Was involved in an education-related state legislative initiative.	23	88	3	12	1.12	.326
Communicated with the superintendent or member of the board of education about an education-related issue.	21	81	5	19	1.19	.402
Volunteered my time at a school or district event.	27	100	0	0	1.00	.000
Made a financial contribution to a school or district-related initiative.	22	85	4	15	1.15	.368
Asked another parent or community member to participate in a school or district-related initiative.	24	92	2	8	1.08	.272
Asked another parent or community member to make a financial contribution to a school or district-related initiative.	11	42	15	58	1.58	.504
Supported the campaign of a candidate based in part on education-related issues.	19	73	7	27	1.27	.452

The two items in the action domain resulting in the highest number of yes responses were: "...I have volunteered my time at a school or district event," to which 100% marked yes ($M = 1.00$); and "...I have asked another parent or community member to participate in a school or district-related initiative," to which 92% marked yes ($M = 1.08$). The two items that received the lowest level of agreement were as follows: "...I have submitted a letter to the editor of a local newspaper concerning a school district-related issue," to which 27% marked yes ($M = 1.73$); and 42 % marked yes ($M = 1.58$) to "...I have asked another parent or community member to make a financial contribution to a school or district-related initiative."

Other observations: Eighty-eight percent (88%) marked yes to "...I have been involved in an education-related state legislative initiative" ($M = 1.12$) and 73% marked yes to "...I have supported the campaign of a candidate based in part on education-related issues" ($M = 1.27$). Sixty-nine percent (69%) marked yes to "...I have written about a school district-related issue on a blog, Facebook[®], Twitter[®], or another social media site" ($M = 1.31$).

Means for the action domain cohorts indicated that the highest level of mean cohort agreement was for "...I have volunteered my time at a school or district event" at $M = 1.00$ for both LSV 09-10 and LSV 10-11, as shown in Table 15. Note that a p -value could not be calculated because the standard deviation for both groups was zero. The lowest level of cohort response agreement was for "...asked another parent or community member to make a financial contribution to a school or district-related initiative" with $M = 1.42$ for LSV 09-10 and $M = 1.71$ for LSV 10-11. There were no statistically significant differences in mean cohort responses found in any of the items.

Table 15

Action Domain (alpha =.658) Descriptive Data, Cohort t-Test, and Pearson's Correlation

After getting involved with LSV I have done these things: ^a	N	M ^a	SD	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	M Dif.	<i>r</i>
Shared knowledge about school district-related information with my PTO.							
2009-2010	12	1.00	.000	.082	-1.883	-.214	-.33
2010-2011	14	1.21	.426				
Asked another parent or community member to participate in a school or district-related initiative.							
2009-2010	12	1.00	.000	.165	-1.472	-.143	-.62
2010-2011	14	1.14	.363				
Submitted a letter to the editor of a local newspaper concerning a district-related issue.							
2009-2010	12	1.83	.389	.285	1.094	.190	.21
2010-2011	14	1.64	.497				
Made a financial contribution to a school or a district-related initiative.							
2009-2010	12	1.08	.289	.376	-.901	-.131	-.17
2010-2011	14	1.21	.426				
Communicated with the superintendent or member of the board of education about an education-related issue.							
2009-2010	12	1.25	.452	.509	.670	.107	.13
2010-2011	14	1.14	.363				

Table 15, continued

Action Domain (alpha =.658) Descriptive Data, Cohort t-Test, and Pearson's Correlation

After getting involved with LSV I have done these things: ^a	N	M ^a	SD	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	M Dif.	<i>r</i>
Supported the campaign of a candidate based in-part on education-related issues.							
2009-2010	12	1.33	.492	.515	.661	.119	.13
2010-2011	14	1.21	.426				
Asked another parent of community member to make a financial contribution to a school or district-related initiative.							
2009-2010	12	1.42	.515	.136	-1.542	-.298	-.28
2010-2011	14	1.71	.469				
Written about a school district-related issue on a blog, Facebook, Twitter, or another social media site.							
2009-2010	12	1.25	.452	.573	-.571	-.107	-.11
2010-2011	14	1.36	.497				
Was involved in an education-related state legislative initiative.							
2009-2010	12	1.08	.289	.652	-.457	-.060	-.09
2010-2011	14	1.14	.363				
Volunteered my time at a school or district event.							
2009-2010	12	1.00	.000			.000	
2010-2011	15	1.00	.000				

^a. Range of Yes/No responses are: Yes = 1, No = 2

Module Evaluation Domain

The five items in the module evaluation domain asked respondents to use the 5-point Likert scale responses to evaluate the value of the training presentations included in the LSV training. The highest level of agreement in this domain was for “The school board president’s presentation at LSV was valuable,” to which 97% marked strongly agree or agree ($M = 1.42$). The lowest level of agreement was for “Overall, getting to know parent representatives from other schools was valuable,” to which 85% marked either strongly agree or agree ($M = 1.74$), as shown in Table 16.

Table 16

Module Evaluation Domain Responses with Percentages, Means, and Standard

Deviations

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements:	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Ag Nor Dis		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		M	SD
		%		%		%		%		%		
The superintendent's updates at LSV were valuable.	12	59	10	37	1	4	0	0	0	0	1.44	.577
The school board president's presentation at LSV was valuable.	16	62	9	35	1	4	0	0	0	0	1.42	.578
Overall, LSV presentations about district departments were valuable.	16	59	10	37	1	4	0	0	0	0	1.44	.577
Overall, LSV presentations by state officials were valuable.	14	52	11	41	2	7	0	0	0	0	1.56	.641
Overall, getting to know parent representatives from other schools was valuable.	11	41	12	44	4	15	0	0	0	0	1.74	.712

Other observations: All respondents assigned high levels of agreement for all the LSV presentation modules and activities. There were no disagree or strongly disagree responses.

An independent samples *t*-Test for the module evaluation domain responses indicated no statistically significant differences in mean cohort responses for any of the five domain items. The highest level of cohort response agreement was for “Overall, LSV

presentations about district departments were valuable” with $M = 1.42$ for LSV 09-10 and $M = 1.47$ for LSV 10-11. The lowest level of cohort response agreement in this domain was for “Overall, getting to know other parent representatives from other schools was valuable” with $M = 1.58$ for LSV 09-10 and $M = 1.87$ for LSV 10-11.

Table 17

Module Evaluation Domain (alpha = .896) Descriptive Data, Cohort t-Test, and Pearson's Correlation

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements:	N	M ^a	SD	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	M Dif.	<i>r</i>
The school board president's presentation at LSV was valuable.							
2009-2010	12	1.50	.674	.541	.621	.143	.12
2010-2011	14	1.36	.497				
Overall, LSV presentations about district department were valuable.							
2009-2010	12	1.42	.669	.828	-.219	-.050	-.04
2010-2011	15	1.47	.516				
Overall, LSV presentations by state officials were valuable.							
2009-2010	12	1.42	.669	.323	-1.008	-.250	-.19
2010-2011	15	1.67	.617				
Overall, getting to know parent representatives from other schools was valuable.							
2009-2010	12	1.58	.669	.314	-1.028	-.283	-.20
2010-2011	15	1.87	.743				
The superintendent's updates at LSV were valuable.							
2009-2010	12	1.33	.651	.381	-.891	-.200	-.17
2010-2011	15	1.53	.516				

Training Evaluation

The five items in the training evaluation domain asked respondents to evaluate various aspects of the LSV training and whether they would recommend the program to others. The highest level of agreement among the training evaluation items was for “LSV

has increased my knowledge of school district operations” with 96% marking strongly agree or agree (M = 1.41). The lowest level of agreement was for the item: “LSV has strengthened my problem-solving skills in education-related issues,” with 74% marking strongly agree or agree (M = 2.07), as shown in Table 18.

Table 18

Training Evaluation Domain Responses with Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviations

Evaluating your LSV experience:	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither Ag Nor Dis		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		M	SD
		%		%		%		%		%		
LSV has increased my knowledge of school district operations.	17	63	9	33	1	4	0	0	0	0	1.41	.572
LSV has expanded my relationship with local and state education officials.	10	37	11	41	5	19	1	4	0	0	1.89	.847
LSV has strengthened my problem-solving skills in education-related issues.	6	22	14	52	6	22	1	4	0	0	2.07	.781
LSV has caused me to become more involved in school and/or district-related issues.	7	26	15	56	4	15	1	4	0	0	1.96	.759
I would recommend LSV to friends and acquaintances.	17	63	8	30	2	7	0	0	0	0	1.44	.641

Other observations: All respondents assigned high levels of agreement for all the LSV training activities. In response to “I would recommend LSV to friends and acquaintances,” 93% marked strongly agree or agree (M = 1.44). Three items had a disagree response of 4% (with one respondent each), but there were no strongly disagree responses to any of the training evaluation items.

An independent samples t-Test for the training evaluation domain responses indicated no statistically significant mean differences in cohort responses for any of the five domain items. The highest mean cohort response was for “LSV has increased my knowledge of school district operations” with $M = 1.42$ for LSV 09-10 and $M = 1.40$ for LSV 10-11. While not statistically significant, the lowest mean cohort agreement was for “LSV has strengthened my problem solving skills for education-related issues” with $M = 1.92$ for LSV 09-10 and $M = 2.20$ for LSV 10-11.

Table 19

Training Evaluation Domain (alpha = .868) Descriptive Data, Cohort t-Test, and Pearson's Correlation

Evaluating your LSV experience:	N	M ^a	SD	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	M Dif.	<i>r</i>
LSV has strengthened my problem-solving skills in education-related issues.							
2009-2010	12	1.92	.996	.359	-.935	-.283	-.17
2010-2011	15	2.20	.561				
LSV has caused me to become more involved in school and/or district-related issues.							
2009-2010	12	1.92	.900	.783	-.279	-.083	-.05
2010-2011	15	2.00	.655				
LSV has expanded my relationship with local and state education officials.							
2009-2010	12	1.92	.996	.882	.149	.050	.03
2010-2011	15	1.87	.743				
LSV has increased my knowledge of school district operations.							
2009-2010	12	1.42	.669	.942	.074	.019	.02
2010-2011	15	1.40	.507				
I would recommend LSV to friends and acquaintances.							
2009-2010	12	1.33	.651	.431	-.801	-.20	-.15
2010-2011	15	1.53	.640				

PTO Instrument

A Qualtrics email survey (see Appendix C) was emailed to 46 former PTO presidents in SVVSD. These individuals served their terms of office during the 2009-2010 academic year (hereafter referred to as PTO 09-10) or the 2010-2011 academic year (hereafter referred to as PTO 10-11) at one of the schools in SVVSD. The electronic survey was using email addresses provided by a district administrator. Twenty individuals (43 %) responded to the survey as shown in Table 20.

Table 20

PTO Instrument Responses Frequency

Cohort	N	Respondents
2009-2010	27	13
2010-2011	29	6
Cohort unknown		1
Total	56	20

The PTO presidents' instrument was designed to determine the respondents' level of awareness about the LSV training. It was also intended to gauge the secondary effect of education-related information and relationships resulting from LSV reaching, informing, or otherwise affecting PTOs. The instrument consisted of 10 items with a yes/unsure/no choice of response. The response frequency and response percentage for each survey item are shown in Table 21.

Table 21

PTO Responses with Percentages, Means and Standard Deviations

Your knowledge about the LSV training: Response options: yes/unsure/no	Yes	%	Unsure	%	No	%	M	SD
I am aware of the school district's training program for parents called Leadership St. Vrain.	13	65	0	0	7	35	1.70	.979
I know a parent (other than myself) who has been involved in the Leadership St. Vrain training.	10	50	1	5	9	20	1.95	.999
When I was PTO president, at least one other PTO parent had been involved in Leadership St. Vrain.	10	53	4	21	5	26	1.74	.872
Members of our school PTO routinely discussed information from Leadership St. Vrain at our PTO meetings.	8	40	0	0	12	60	2.20	1.005
At least one member of our PTO shared information at a PTO meeting that was attributed to Leadership St. Vrain.	12	63	2	11	5	26	1.63	.895
I am aware that members of Leadership St. Vrain frequently met with the superintendent of schools.	8	40	3	15	9	45	2.05	.945
I am aware that members of Leadership St. Vrain frequently met with school board members or other elected officials.	11	55	2	10	7	35	1.80	.951
I think members of Leadership St. Vrain obtained valuable information about school district affairs in their trainings.	9	45	9	45	2	20	1.65	.671
Leadership St. Vrain favorably impacted our school's PTO during my time as PTO president.	8	40	8	40	6	30	1.90	.852
I would recommend Leadership St. Vrain to other PTO members and parents.	11	55	8	40	1	5	1.50	.607

The items that received the highest percentages of yes responses on the PTO Presidents' survey were "I am aware of the school district's training program for parents called Leadership St. Vrain," with 65% of respondents ($M = 1.70$), and "At least one member of our PTO shared information at a PTO meeting that was attributed to Leadership St. Vrain," with 63% of respondents ($M = 1.63$). The items with the highest percentages of no responses were "Members of our school PTO routinely discussed information from Leadership St. Vrain at our PTO meetings," with 60% of respondents ($M = 2.20$), and "I am aware that members of Leadership St. Vrain frequently met with the superintendent of schools," with 45% of respondents ($M = 2.05$). The responses also reflected a significant level of uncertainty. In response to three items, 40% to 45% of respondents marked unsure.

Of PTO respondents, 65% indicated that they were aware of the LSV training and 63% of respondents recalled at least one occasion when one member shared information from LSV at a PTO meeting. However, 35% of PTO respondents were unaware of LSV and 60% marked no to the statement, "A member of the PTO routinely discussed information from Leadership St. Vrain at the PTO meetings." While 55% of respondents said yes when asked if they would recommend LSV to others, 40% said they were unsure.

An independent samples *t*-Test for the PTO response means indicated two instances of significant mean differences in cohort responses. The first item, "Members of our school PTO routinely discussed information from Leadership St. Vrain at our PTO meetings" was statistically significant ($p = .003$) with correlation ($r = .60$). The second item, "I would recommend LSV to other PTO members and parents.," had a statistically

significant difference in mean cohort response ($p = .017$) with correlation ($r = .52$), as shown in Table 22. The highest level of cohort response agreement was for “When I was PTO president, at least one other parent was involved in LSV” with $M = 1.80$ for LSV 09-10 and $M = 1.62$ for LSV 10-11. The lowest level of cohort response agreement was for “Members of our PTO routinely discussed information from LSV at our PTO” with $M = 3.00$ for LSV 09-10 and $M = 1.92$ for LSV 10-11.

Table 22

PTO Descriptive Data (alpha = .907), Cohort Data, t-Tests, and Pearson's Correlation

Your knowledge about the LSV training:	N	M	SD	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	M Dif.	<i>r</i>
Members of our school PTO routinely discussed information from LSV at our PTO meetings.							
2009-2010	20	3.00	.000	.003	3.742	1.077	.60
2010-2011		1.92	1.038				
I think members of LSV obtained valuable information about school district affairs in their trainings.							
2009-2010	20	1.83	.408	.432	.806	.218	.17
2010-2011		1.62	.768				
I know a parent (other than myself) who has been involved in the LSV training.							
2009-2010	20	2.50	.837	.143	1.535	.713	.36
2010-2011		1.77	1.013				
LSV favorably impacted our school's PTO during my time as PTO president.							
2009-2010	20	2.17	.753	.373	.916	.397	.23
2010-2011		1.77	.927				
I am aware that members of LSV frequently met with the superintendent of schools.							
2009-2010	20	2.67	.816	.075	1.899	.821	.43
2010-2011		1.85	.899				

Table 22, continued

PTO Descriptive Data (alpha = .907), Cohort Data, t-Tests, and Pearson's Correlation

Your knowledge about the LSV training:	N	M	SD	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	M Dif.	<i>r</i>
At least one member of our PTO shared information at a PTO meeting that was attributed to LSV							
2009-2010	19	2.17	.983	.099	1.750	.750	.39
2010-2011		1.42	.793				
I am aware of the school district's training program for parents called LSV.							
2009-2010	20	2.33	1.033	.073	1.908	.872	.41
2010-2011		1.46	.877				
I am aware that members of LSV frequently met with school board members or other elected officials.							
2009-2010	20	2.33	1.033	.133	1.580	.718	.29
2010-2011		1.62	.870				
I would recommend LSV to other PTO members and parents.							
2009-2010	20	2.00	.632	.017	2.648	.692	.52
2010-2011		1.31	.480				
When I was PTO president, at least one other PTO parent had been involved in LSV.							
2009-2010	19	1.80	.837	.689	.407	.185	.10
2010-2011		1.62	.870				

The items with the highest mean agreement between PTO 9-10 and PTO 10-11 were “When I was PTO president, at least one other PTO parent had been involved in Leadership St. Vrain” with $M = 1.80$ for PTO 9-10 and $M = 1.62$ for PTO 10-11, and “I would recommend Leadership St. Vrain to other PTO members and parents” with $M = 2.00$ for PTO 9-10 and $M = 1.31$ for PTO 10-11.

In each of the 10 items in the PTO presidents’ survey, the responses from participants from PTO 09-10 registered a higher mean score, suggesting a higher degree of unfamiliarity with LSV. This was congruent with the fact that 2009-2010 was the first year that the school district sponsored the LSV training. Given the size of the district, it took time for awareness of district initiatives to extend to parents, PTO leaders, and others at the school level. The statistical evidence indicates that PTO 10-11 presidents were more aware of the LSV training.

Phase 2: Qualitative Data Evaluation

LSV Interviews

In the early spring of 2012, I conducted 10 face-to-face interviews with former LSV participants who had taken the LSV survey. Using cognitive interview techniques (Beatty & Willis, 2007), the researcher used probes and follow-up questions to enable the interviewees to elaborate on experiences, concepts, and reflections that arose spontaneously (see Appendix E for a list of interview questions used to guide the conversation). Each interview lasted approximately 50 minutes and took place in the offices of SVVSD. The interviews were recorded, and each participant provided a signed informed consent form, granting me permission to conduct and record the interview (See Appendix D for a copy of the consent form).

The question and analysis interview format for the former LSV participants centered on the seven domains contained in the survey instrument: knowledge, relationships, willingness, action, efficacy, module evaluation and training evaluation. In addition, several themes emerged spontaneously over the course of the 10 interviews, including involvement, trust, and LSV as a model training for other school districts around the state and nation. In addition to these emerging themes, a number of sub-topics also emerged based on the domain discussions; these sub-topics are highlighted in the domain summaries that follow.

Knowledge Domain

One of the primary objectives of the LSV training was to provide parents with detailed information or knowledge about how the school district operated. This included knowledge pertaining to organizational structure, instructional programs, policies and practices, governance and school finance. For the purposes of this research, this body of knowledge was referred to as know-how. During each LSV training meeting, a different area of know-how was introduced to the participants, with an extensive presentation by a subject matter expert (usually a department director or state official). Always included was the opportunity to ask questions and participate in a discussion of the topic. See Appendix H for a sample of the typical LSV annual schedule.

When asked to talk about areas of knowledge about which the interviewee recalled learning in the LSV training, the area of school finance was mentioned on numerous occasions. In particular, participants referred to presentations by guest speaker Natalie Mullis, chief economist for the State of Colorado. "...the contact with the state

was incredible,” said one parent. “I was totally uninformed, or should I say misinformed, about how the school [district] interacted with the state.” This parent elaborated,

I always assumed there was a kind of a buffer between a district, and that the state education department acted as a buffer between the legislature. But I found that there was quite a bit more going on at the state legislature level, at least in this district, than I had ever expected.

This parent also mentioned attempts he had made, previous to LSV, to obtain an understanding of the district’s financial matters.

What I had found was that I didn’t have the knowledge I needed to really understand the questions. Meaning I would look at the budget and say “Gee, that’s a lot of money.” But I didn’t understand how you were thinking about the budget.

On this topic, another parent referred to the meeting with the chief economist as a “highlight” of the training experience. She said, “I learned so much about the district and education funding in general at the state level from that meeting.” Another parent stated

That was a really important meeting to me, because it put perspective on what the district can do and what the state is doing for the district. And how the district can do the best job in the world but can still be at the mercy of what the state gives us.

Echoing this sentiment, another parent stated, “The financial piece was very interesting, as well as frustrating. . . it seems like we’re always beating our head against the wall in the state of Colorado to support our schools.” In response to the survey question “Leadership St. Vrain (LSV) significantly improved my knowledge of the State of Colorado’s role in school funding,” 92% of respondents (M = 1.48) marked strongly agree or agree.

When asked about any valuable knowledge gained in the training, one parent disclosed that she had taken away basic information that “educated people should know.”

With regard to presentations by different school district administrative staff, the same parent stated

I liked how they had different departments come in and explain what their roles were in the school district. Some of us have mainstream kids who don't need special education or don't need resource officers and those types of things, so that was an interesting piece of knowledge.

This parent further disclosed that these explanations helped dispel the myth that some kids were getting preferential treatment. "It was an eye-opener for me to understand that's why we have to do these five things for this one child or these sets of children that are in a very small set." Similar to this comment, another parent appreciated the staff presentation on the district's focus school initiative to expand the availability of unique instructional programs such as international baccalaureate and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). She said,

Honestly, I was a skeptic at the beginning. I still think focus programs are a reaction to market schools as a result of charter schools. I'm still not convinced that public dollars are best spent on marketing, but now I know it's more than marketing. It's more than just a label. It's real. It's intrinsic into the core curriculum.

To survey item "LSV significantly improved my knowledge of the district's instructional programs," 85% of respondents (M = 1.78) marked strongly agree or agree.

Another knowledge area mentioned by interviewees was a greater understanding of district-wide operations. One parent expressed gratitude for the opportunity to "not just learn about my school, but the district as a whole." Another parent explained

...I wanted to look at things more at the state level and a broader level, not just how education was impacted in my kids' immediate schools. But how it impacted kids on a broader level, Boulder County and our state.

Another parent said he was motivated to participate in LSV because he wanted to focus on the district level rather than only on his child's elementary school, where he had been involved in the PTO, fundraisers, and other day-to-day business. On the survey, in response to "LSV significantly improved my knowledge of district policies and practices," 97% of respondents (M = 1.63) marked strongly agree or agree. And to the closely related "LSV significantly improved my knowledge of the district's organizational structure," 93% of respondents (M = 1.44) marked strongly agree or agree.

When discussing the various types of knowledge that parents were exposed to in the LSV training, two parents, who, apart from participation with LSV, were highly involved at the school level, each mentioned other topics. One described a change in the behavior of her school's principal, which she attributed to parents having access to information and administrators from "downtown."

When I started in this district, it was downtown. Everything was downtown. It was the fault of downtown no matter what went on in that school. "The folks downtown are telling us we've got to do that." It was pretty bad. The big black hole in the middle of town that was mandating all this terrible stuff in the schools. The principals would wash their hands of it. "Downtown told us to do that." They weren't really part of the structure or part of the team or part of the solution. But that's changed. Hugely.

Another parent described an improved sense of insight into what decisions could actually be made by the principal at the school level that determined important issues such as class size. Prior to the LSV training, the principal could attribute unpopular decisions to the central office. This parent obtained knowledge at LSV that increased principal accountability. She said

The understanding of the FTE [full-time equivalent]. How many kids can be in a classroom? That it's sometimes mostly the building, the principal's judgment, on how many kids can go in a classroom based on if he has open enrollment. It's up to his discretion if he should have a mixed fourth and fifth grade."

Another parent said LSV resulted in greater transparency from principals. “It keeps them honest,” she said.

Relationship Domain

Another primary objective of the LSV training was to provide parents with opportunities to develop relationships with individuals who had influence on leadership and decision-making at the school district level or regarding education-related issues that affected students and parents. I referred to these key relationships as “know-who,” and included the superintendent of schools, the president of the board of education and other board members, school district department directors, state officials, and other elected officials who impacted education policy. Each LSV training session provided participants the opportunity to meet these key education leaders. The guest speakers—whether a department director or the president of the Colorado senate—were asked to provide parents with their contact information for follow-up.

When interviewees were asked whether they had been given the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with school staff, elected officials, and other parents, as a result of LSV, all responded in the affirmative. Many referred to specific individuals with whom they had follow-up contact. When asked about valuable relationships she had developed in the training presentations, one parent said, “They all seemed to be department heads or in charge of something...I know Randy’s name because I call their department [transportation] on a regular basis.” Regarding the value of these relationships, she added, “You could put a face to a name. Oh, if I need information I can go talk to that person.” Another parent said

The structure was very good too. Because each time you would bring in a different director or different leader of a different department of the district. Some

were better than others or I just had more of an interest in. But it was the first time I was exposed to the legislators, like [State Representative] Jack Pommer. I think he was a congressman at the time. . . . [Senator] Eve Hudak was another one who came in and talked about the Colorado growth model three years ago when it was just being developed and how it was going to change the CSAP tests.

Superintendent Don Haddad routinely attended the LSV meetings, a fact that participants repeatedly mentioned in the interviews. “I loved having Don come and update us at each meeting to let us know what he was working on,” said one parent.

Another commented

Oh, I think it helps tremendously on the level of trust. We live in an environment of distrust now against government, public services in general. When the school district opens their doors and invites people in and takes time out of their day to bring in the directors, executives, and Don, to shoot straight and tell us what’s going on.

Another parent said

I think the fact that there was always a representative . . . the superintendent or one of the administrators to come to our meetings, and that they felt we were important enough to listen and to tell us information. I think that started a level of trust.

In response to the survey item “Because of relationship-building opportunities made available to me in LSV I am more likely to contact the superintendent about an education-related issue,” 77% of the respondents ($M = 1.92$) marked strongly agree or agree. An independent *t*-test of cohort means indicated participants from LSV 09-10 were more likely to contact the superintendent regarding an education-related issue, but the mean differences were not significant. Interviewees also made reference to their access to school board president, John Creighton.

Understanding the school board. In particular, the board president, John Creighton, came in, and I was really impressed with him. Understanding how the board worked and what role the board played. Later in the interview, this same parent said,

I mean, I got to talk to people and ask questions. I can't think of an event where people ducked my questions in any way, even the difficult questions. I started to understand the motivations and why people did what they did. Through that personal contact I trust those folks now... [I] talk to the school board. I disagree with [and ask] "What are you doing about this?" I do that now. Absolutely.

Another parent commented that they were able to meet the board president.

He comes across as very approachable. He understands the board of education and what it's all about. By the end of the meeting you know that you can call him and ask him questions. It's very comfortable. You know that he's available.

Another interviewee stated, "One person that I was totally impressed with is the board president. How much he knows, how long he's been there, and that I see him everywhere. He's very personable."

In survey responses to "Because of relationship-building opportunities made available to me in LSV I am more likely to contact a board member about an education-related issue," 81% of the respondents ($M = 1.96$) marked strongly agree or agree. An independent *t*-test of cohort means indicated individuals in LSV 09-10 were more likely to contact a board member regarding an education-related issue, but the cohort means were not significantly different ($p = .203$).

A sub-topic that emerged about relationships in the interviews was the interpersonal dynamics among the LSV participants. In several instances, interviewees commented on their initial impressions of an LSV colleague and how their relationship evolved over the course of the training. One interviewee said, when referring to a colleague in the training, stated

I think she is a person that I probably wouldn't naturally gravitate toward, but because of LSV we discovered we had the same connection, or a shared connection of education. I was able to get to know her more and hear her speak and hear her opinions. That created a connection.

The interviewee went on to elaborate on the positive evolution of her relationship with the other parent as a result of their repeated encounters at the trainings:

I would say, without LSV, it probably wouldn't have happened. Which I find very interesting. Because I have nothing but respect for her, but sometimes that first impression can cause you to maybe shut a door that you shouldn't. Because I saw her month after month. By the end, I really enjoyed her. It was wonderful and now we have a great relationship.

Another interviewee described a similar experience in regard to a training colleague:

I knew who she was before. I thought I knew things about her. I wouldn't have chosen to become a comrade of hers. . . . We would chat at length almost after every meeting. Are we social friends now? Do I call her up and have coffee? No. However, if she would call me and say "I need help with something, would you consider doing this?" I would be happy to entertain that notion and see what time commitment and how it fits in my schedule.

Another interviewee described building a connection with another parent and LSV participant who lived in her neighborhood but who she had never met previous to the training: "Our kids did not go to the same elementary school, but now they do go to the same middle school, which I'm the PTO president of." The parent commented that they had become connected as a result of LSV and have remained in touch on school-related issues after the LSV training.

Willingness Domain

By providing participants with the know-how and know-who, the LSV experience was intended to raise participant willingness to be involved in a variety of education-related activities, including informal conversations with others, PTO or other school committee meetings, board of education meetings, and legislative hearings at the state capitol. In the qualitative evaluation of the interview content, I identified instances in

which interviewees articulated how their willingness to be involved might have been affected by the LSV trainings.

One interviewee was clear that her level of willingness had not changed; she stated that she was always a highly involved parent and that engaging in school business was a role she knew she would be playing. Another parent—also already highly involved—thought she would be more likely to be increasingly involved in other education activities as a result of her LSV experience. “I think I’d be more likely to,” she said. “Particularly, because I’ve been pushing this idea of PEN [Parent Engagement Network], and I think that’s something I’d really like to see start up in St. Vrain.” About her increased willingness, this parent elaborated by saying,

I was on the superintendent’s parents group, prior to that. I think I have the tendency to that stuff. But I think LSV gave me something different. It was more than just the superintendent’s parents meeting before. I think LSV gave me a good picture of the district.

This parent mentioned that she had learned to be proactive rather than waiting for things to happen, and stated that she was “Very different now than before.” In survey responses to item, “Because of my participation with LSV I am more likely to participate in informal conversations with others about education,” 96% of respondents (M = 1.33) marked strongly agree or agree.

In discussions with interviewees on the subject of willingness, the sub-topic of confidence repeatedly emerged. Most of the parents mentioned having increased confidence with regard to education-related issues as a result of their participation in LSV. One parent described LSV as “. . . a springboard to go from thinking very local to thinking not so local.” She explained she “. . . needed the confidence about knowing more about how the district worked. And I needed the experience of putting myself out

there a little bit more.” Another parent said, “I think my level of confidence has increased as far as knowing what kinds of decisions you need to make in the district and all the different things that are going on. That’s definitely created more confidence.” Another said

I think that LSV has given me more confidence to assert myself and to advocate for the things that I believe in. I don’t want to necessarily say it’s just for SVVSD, but for anything that I would like to do.

On the topic of increased confidence, another parent described watching another participant she knew from her neighborhood:

For me, I got it and I connected the dots. But I do have a friend who participated in LSV. She enjoyed it tremendously... She’s just a more introverted, more quiet person, so it wasn’t in her comfort zone to step out and go to the capitol and go speak in front of committees. But another issue that is going on here locally, fracking, she has been sending out emails to people about the issue and about her concerns. I honestly think that is something she would not have done before she had been part of a group like LSV. Even though it’s a different topic. Well, actually not, because the fracking is going on very close to the school. I think, to the best of her ability, it has drawn her out and she said “You know, I’m not afraid to send an email to everybody I know about an issue I’m concerned about.” I really don’t think she would have done that before. So even beyond the silo of education, it sort of empowers people to say “Okay, I’m not afraid to say something and I wouldn’t have done that before.”

Another parent commented that being well informed empowered him to reach out to colleagues:

In many cases, my conversations were with people about the things I learned. . . . Certainly, my opinions have been part of those conversations, but part of what I’ve done is talk to them about how the district works. How the finance works. How much of a role the state really plays.

Another sub-topic was a prevalent realization that many of the problems the school district faced resulted from legislative initiatives and statutory laws affecting the governance and management of local districts. One parent referred to the district as being

...at the mercy of what the state gives us... There's only so much you can do at this district level. If you're happy with what the district is doing and you think they're doing a fine job, but they're not being supported by their state, then you go to the next level. That's where I hit after LSV.

Another parent offered a similar sentiment:

For the financial piece, it seems like we're always beating our head against the wall in the state of Colorado to support our schools. . . . That level of knowledge was valuable to me because I like to learn. The second thing is I am a very social person. I am happy to always assert my opinion about things about the school when people have a misunderstanding about funding or how they think things work.

Another parent said, "We recognized. . . we've got to elevate. We've got to go up to the state level because what's happening in the district is being driven by the decisions being made at the state level."

In survey responses to "Because of my participation in Leadership St. Vrain, I am more likely to participate at legislative hearings at the state capitol," no respondents marked strongly agree, and 56% of respondents ($M = 2.56$) marked agree. A somewhat larger percentage of respondents—67%— ($M = 2.30$) marked strongly agree or agree to being more likely to contact a state legislator about an education-related issue. Note that an independent t -test of this item identified a statistically significant difference in the cohort means ($p = .008$) At least one interviewee stated that involvement with the legislature was not something she was inclined to do.

I'm not a political person. . . . To go out and push for a political issue, that's not really my natural tendency. I try to be more helpful to programs to say "What do the parents at your school need?" and "What kind of programs can you do to help your kids at home."

Efficacy Domain

The LSV training was meant to strengthen participants' awareness of the rich diversity of stakeholders in the public school district and the value of working toward

solutions to challenging problems through deliberative problem solving. For purposes of this study, efficacy represents the abilities individuals have at working through difficult problems with others. Interviews conducted with former LSV participants included questions about public engagement and the interviewees' perceptions about the value of engaging diverse groups of people in problem solving, particularly when there appeared to be fundamental differences in positions, values, and perspectives. When discussing the topic of efficacy in the interviews, I noticed several occasions in which interviewees redirected questions about deliberative practice to the interpersonal dynamics of the cohort group. Though tangentially related to the topic, several members struggled to respond to the questions in the context of problem solving at the district and community level.

Interviewees, who understood the issue of efficacy in terms of public deliberation as an effective means of working through issues and finding solutions, discussed the practical challenges of bridging the seemingly insurmountable gap among parents and other stakeholders. "I've definitely learned to consider where people are coming from," said one parent. Two other interviewees discussed the challenge of "... getting people together to have a conversation instead of being mad at each other and not getting anywhere." Another recognized the importance of inclusion, but asked "How do you come to consensus with someone who is completely different-minded than you?" Another parent said the material presented on the topic of public deliberation was appealing, and that it was a reminder of what she learned in college and that a school district was not just made up of parents who are college level learners, but represented a

more diverse population. “It’s the whole world, or the whole district. Or it’s this parent and this parent,” she said.

Two other parents shared their experience of a breakthrough moment when they realized their opinion wasn’t the only opinion in the room. In contrast, another parent questioned the feasibility of different groups of people who were frequently distrustful and angry, working through problems together. She asked, “Okay, how can you be in a big room with all these people? Everybody has a different background, no matter what, you have different experiences and different backgrounds. . .” She went on to say, “I thought it was great theory. But it was hard to take that away and do something with it.”

An efficacy-related sub-topic that emerged from the interviews pertained to the unique nature of public education practices and the challenge of getting informed input for such a complex bureaucracy. One parent said

People will take their own experience, which is very normal in whatever business capacity they’re in, and apply it to education. But sometimes it just doesn’t fit. Education can be extremely customized. I’ve said before the only other industry I can really compare education to is medicine, in terms of the customization of the service.

Another interviewee, an engineer by profession, discussed difficulty communicating with his colleagues—other engineers—about the complexities of school funding. “I’ve found most people had similar views of districts that I had before I became involved. . .” which was “. . . based on the outdated knowledge of going to school in the ‘60s and ‘70s, not the way things are now.” Another parent, with an extensive history of engagement and leadership at her children’s schools prior to participating in the LSV training, was surprised by the extent of financial planning required at the district level. She recalled

. . . going home from the financial meeting and immediately talking to a couple of friends and just saying “I had no idea how much planning went into the financial piece.” And how many—the fact that there were 25,000 students never really sunk in with me.

One parent, who held a master’s degree in business administration, described the unique nature of public education by saying, “When you have people coming from a more business-type background, where they are making widgets, insurance, or something, a lot of the same techniques don’t apply.”

In survey responses to the item “To some degree, it is from my experience with LSV that I understand that finding solutions to controversial problems frequently means having uncomfortable conversations with people I disagree with,” 97% of respondents ($M = 1.63$) marked strongly agree or agree. An independent t -test of mean cohort responses for the efficacy domain showed no statistical significance in cohort responses. The Cronbach’s alpha test for reliability for the efficacy domain was the lowest domain alpha in the study at $\alpha = .606$. This finding is slightly above the .6 level of internal consistency acceptable in exploratory case studies (Nunnally, 1978; Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991).

Action Domain

Central to this study were the actions that LSV participants may have taken after getting involved in the training. The action domain of the LSV survey instrument included 10 items, twice the number for the other domains. The items ranged from sharing information with the participant’s PTO to supporting the campaign of a candidate based on an education-related issue. When asked for a yes/no response to each of the 10 action items, the respondents’ rate of yes responses was 74.5%, and the rate of no

responses was 25.5%. Of the 27 respondents, 24 indicated taking between 5 and 10 actions after getting involved in the training as shown in Table 23. The topic of action was included in the participant interviews to obtain more detailed information. Interview responses correlated with the survey findings overall, but a number of interviews revealed types of action that were not included in the survey instrument, and two additional sub-topics emerged in the interviews.

Table 23

Number of Actions Taken by Respondents After Getting Involved with LSV

Actions Taken	Number of Respondents
9–10	9
7–8	10
5–6	5
3–4	1
1–2	2
0	0

Several interviewees mentioned sharing information learned in LSV with friends and PTO members at their children’s schools. Two parents disclosed that specific information from LSV was included in school newsletters. Another parent talked about informal conversations with parents at school, with colleagues at work, and with

members of the school board. During his interview, this parent described himself as “pretty conservative” and shared some challenges having discussions.

I find myself not as involved with the actual teachers as much because I don’t share. I’m politically pretty conservative and they’re pretty liberal and we have a fairly difficult time communicating across that gap with many of the teachers. I certainly respect them. I try to understand their point of view a lot more now.

This parent also mentioned that the nature of his participation in conversations about education had changed. Before participating in LSV, “I would have had some of those conversations, but they probably would have been more of a chiming in or agreeing or disagreeing at a lunchtime conversation, rather than an informative conversation.”

Another interviewee echoed this experience, saying that prior to LSV her conversations would have been different:

I don’t think I would have been comfortable enough to talk about those things with as many people as I did, just because when you feel informed, you feel very empowered, much more powerful.

In response to “After getting involved with LSV I shared knowledge about school district-related information with my school PTO,” 88% of respondents (M = 1.12) marked yes. Responses from interviewees suggested an equally high level of sharing with neighbors, colleagues, and other stakeholders.

One interviewee mentioned that she was a member of the planning and zoning board in the local municipal government. During their official meetings, she shared information from LSV with fellow board members and the community. Another interviewee mentioned that she shared information beyond her school community and beyond the school district’s geographic region. “It’s not just PTO any more. It’s meeting with all PTOs, or meeting with community leaders, or meeting with people in Denver—

for the same purposes it's just higher and higher.” What she meant was that the more information she had, the more she saw her role change in terms of how high up she had to go with the information.

Relevant to the action domain was Grassroots St. Vrain, which emerged as a sub-topic during the interviews. The individuals who started the group believed they needed to develop a platform to distribute information about school district-related issues and engage parents and others in advocacy work. One parent described GSV as a “. . . communication group that tries to share current events, knowledge about the business of education, about what's going on in the education industry and how that's going to impact our schools.” The majority of interviewees mentioned having some connection with GSV, and several described themselves as being proactive in terms of outreach. It was due to LSV that some parents reported their interest in getting involved with GSV. For example,

That [LSV] made me feel more comfortable about getting involved in Grassroots, and in doing campaigning, educating, talking to parents, getting petitions signed, going to speak at parent groups, emails, all kinds of things that I would say are on a broader level.

Another interviewee described testifying— along with several other GSV members— about an education-related issue at the state capitol. GSV members are currently in the process of registering for official non-profit status with the Colorado secretary of state. Leaders of the organization communicate regularly with parents and other stakeholders with email and a Facebook site.

A second sub-topic that emerged during interviews relevant to the action domain was the extent to which LSV members had begun helping other parents solve school and district-related problems by connecting parents with the right person at the district

administration level. One interviewee said that because of what she learned in LSV, she could help other parents:

I became part of a solution. . . . Whatever her issue was it was resolved in a satisfactory manner to the local administrators, the downtown people showed themselves as valuable resources and the parent was happy. I was the one who pointed my finger and said, “Go, Go here. Try this.”

Another parent shared a similar experience:

When I have friends or somebody saying “I’m not happy; I didn’t get a good response from the teacher or from the principal.” Then, it’s easy for me to say “You know what, call Mark Mills. Email him. Talk to him. He would love to hear from you. He will get back to you.” That’s happened two or three times. Not a lot, but the people who do contact him, they hear right back from him. They come back to me. “Thank you, that was a great suggestion.”

Another parent said

At a booster club meeting—which, of course, is mostly athletics, mostly but they do other things there too—I would say “no, no, no, that’s not right” when they would say a thing. “We should call and ask so-and-so to attend our meetings.” Or “you need to connect with this person downtown and he or she will help you with that.” As opposed to listening to Billy Bob across the table who really didn’t know what they were talking about.

Two interviewees specifically referred to the phenomena of directing other parents to the right person to speak with about a problem as a “trickle-down effect.”

Modules Training Domain

Interviewee responses to questions on the value of the LSV training were overwhelmingly positive; parents believed that LSV could be a model for any public school district. Table 23 shows the number of actions taken by the number of respondents.

The following sub-topics also emerged in the qualitative data: connectedness and increased trust. Parents said that the LSV experience gave them a sense of connectedness with other parents. One parent described how she had grown in the training and how she had begun to learn from others:

I know more about technology because of Laura. It's great! Lisa is very involved in the community down in Boulder so she brings a lot of that comparative information back to the group. I feel very, very connected to these people. Really part of a team!

Another parent described how LSV created common ground among parents and administrators, saying, "I think that helps build trust instead of you're [administrators] here and parents are here. You need to have something that is a common ground."

Another parent described developing a feeling of ownership because of LSV:

There were so many things that I learned. I loved having Don [superintendent Don Haddad] come and update us at each meeting to let us know what he was working on. I loved going to other schools and hearing talks from their principals and hearing about what their focus was for their schools and what they did. I loved looking at the schools. It enabled me to see the improvements that they've made because of the bond issue. It really, truly made me understand why I'm a stakeholder in the district.

Another parent described a valuable friendship that developed with another parent and their continued work together at the school level, staying connected with one another in their local neighborhood.

All interviewees shared their perception of increasing trust for the district as a result of LSV, which emerged as another sub-topic in the action domain. One parent described the trust this way: "... people have access and can meet the people or be involved, I think the trust becomes more palpable. They can touch it. They can see it. They can go call somebody." Another respondent shared that because administrators were always active in the LSV meetings, the parents felt valued, heard, and important enough to be informed, and said "I think that started a level of trust." Another interviewee discussed the link between increased trust and administrators participating in the meetings and running the risk of taking a position that someone would find offensive:

Oh, I think it helps tremendously on the level of trust. We live in an environment of distrust now against government, public services in general. When the school district opens their doors and invites people in and takes time out of their day to bring in the directors, executives, and Don to shoot straight and tell us what's going on. And you guys don't know what the outcome is going to be. It's unusually risky on your part.

Another parent articulated the same theme this way: "I do believe I came out of LSV trusting the district more. Absolutely. I felt like everything was very transparent. I came out of it with a great deal of respect and trust of the district."

PTO Qualitative Interviews

In addition to conducting interviews with former LSV participants, I interviewed five former PTO presidents in 2012 to learn more about possible ripple effects of the LSV trainings to the school level. Each interview took place at the administrative offices of SVVSD and lasted approximately 45 minutes. Each of the interviewees had been president of their elementary school PTO when one of two LSV cohorts was active. Of the five PTO president interviews, one president had little awareness of the LSV training, one president had some information about LSV due to a PTO member's participation, and three presidents were highly informed about LSV and actively facilitated the transfer of information between the two groups. In the following section, each of the five interviews is briefly summarized, beginning with the president having the least information about LSV training, and ending with those who were most informed.

PTO President Interview 1. This PTO president served during the 2010-2011 academic year and knew the least about the LSV training among the five presidents who were interviewed. She was not aware of anyone who participated with his or her school PTO or who was affiliated with her school who had participated in LSV. She thought that

having information about district-wide issues might be important, but said she also thought most people were interested in what was happening at their own school, and why their school was not getting what they felt it needed. She could not say if the LSV training would strengthen their school's PTO since this particular PTO was about fundraising and community service. However, she said understanding why the school needed what it needed might help fundraising. She thought participation in LSV could be valuable if it provided insight into the inner workings of the school district, "Especially since there are always misunderstandings or misinformation out there, so it's helpful to get correct facts."

PTO President Interview 2. This president served during the 2009-2010 academic year and was aware that a member of their school PTO attended the LSV meetings. This individual reported back to the PTO with handouts several times over the course of the year. While this president did not have a clear recollection of the purpose of the LSV reports, she found it reassuring to know "Okay, everyone's on the same page." She also said she was thankful when she heard the district talk about parent groups: "I've always felt the district cares about the school and wants that relationship. So I'm just thankful you keep continuing to push for it."

PTO President Interview 3. This president served during the 2010-2011 academic year. She clearly recalled that two members of the school PTO participated in LSV during her presidency. These individuals reported back what they had learned at the LSV meetings to the next PTO meetings. The LSV reports took place at every PTO meeting and were a fixed item on the PTO agenda. "It flowed nicely into our agenda and our committee reports. Of course, one minute it's sock hop, the next minute it's

fundraiser, the next minute it's LSV." This president thought it was a substantial benefit to have parents reporting back. The LSV representatives also took questions and concerns from the school PTO members back to the LSV meetings.

I think it was such a benefit that we had to have—like I said—this window of what was going on in the district and the venue to go back and forth," she said. "If we brought up issues in the meeting, we knew it would be carried back to the district—it was bureaucratic but nonetheless it was going somewhere.

This president also mentioned that she shared the LSV information with her neighborhood group and her ladies coffee club. She said individuals in those groups, even though they might not have kids in school, were interested in the information.

PTO President Interview 4. This PTO president served during the 2010-2011 academic year. She learned about LSV on the school district website and asked the school principal for more information. She stated that it was a big step for her as a person, because she did not consider herself an extroverted person, and she had taken this initiative to serve as PTO president and LSV participant at the same time. Because there were two PTO meetings a month, she was able to report back that month's LSV information to the PTO membership. The LSV reports were fixed items on the PTO agenda while she was president, and were reported in the meeting minutes.

As an LSV member, this PTO president said she was able to relay information from the district and "widen the perspective" of the issues. "I would share my handouts from LSV and talk about what I had learned," she said. Additionally, she was able to begin answering the questions of other parents based on what she was learning at LSV. That was "liberating," she said.

In addition to bringing new information to the PTO, this president brought in outside speakers whom she had met through LSV. She specifically recalled inviting the

school board president to attend their meeting, and he personally updated the membership on district-level developments. The turnout, she recalled, was the highest ever for a PTO meeting; people were very excited.

This interviewee also reported that, at the time of our interview, there was lack of connection between the PTO and LSV because there was no one from the PTO involved in LSV. When she was president, the PTO focused on the whole district; at the time of our interview, it was back to school business only.

PTO President Interview 5. This PTO president served during the 2010-2011 academic year. Prior to that she had been contacted by a parent from another school and encouraged to participate in LSV. While participating in LSV, she became a liaison to her school PTO and, the following year, she became PTO president at another school.

She shared information with both PTOs that she was involved with, and also tried to establish herself as a resource for parents because of what she had learned at LSV. She had enough knowledge to direct people to other places. If, for example, someone had a certain issue or question that they couldn't resolve through the principal, or if it was a higher-level issue, she could tell them whom to call. She referred to herself as “a conduit for people to get to the appropriate contacts and get their questions answered.”

This PTO president gained credibility with the principal as well. She was seen as someone who wanted to be part of the solution, not just showing up when there was an issue or a problem, or contributing advice and then walking away from the meeting. During the year she was in the LSV training, she attended PTO meetings and gave a quick update every month. She characterized the updates as “breaking down barriers or walls” between parents at the school and what was going on at the district level. She

thought that previously there was a real disconnect between what was going on at the local school and “downtown.”

In her view, this barrier contributed to members of the school community feeling they were victims of district mandates. “There was much less cohesiveness among us, and much less ‘We're all on the same team. We're all one. We're all one district.’” At the time of our interview, she thought everyone's goals were mutual in achieving the highest potential for every student.

As a result of new relationships she formed with administrators and board members at LSV, she was able to bring in speakers to the PTO meetings, a practice that has continued for nearly four years. She said that the district safety director had just attended the most recent PTO meeting. It had become established practice to call people from the central office if there was a topic of interest, whether safety, curriculum, or “Why did we choose this textbook?”

The monthly LSV reports were a fixed item on the PTO agenda and the information was included in the minutes and school newsletters while she was president.

Summary. Comments from PTO presidents suggested LSV participants who were liaisons for PTO groups were routinely part of their PTO meeting agendas to share information obtained from the LSV trainings. In PTOs where the president had a higher level of knowledge about LSV, there was a more robust level of communication by LSV members to the PTO membership, reports were a fixed item on the PTO agenda and included in the minutes, and, in some cases, LSV information was made available to the entire community of parents via school newsletters.

PTO presidents with a high level of knowledge about LSV also served as conduits of information to other parents, particularly by answering their questions or directing the parents to a reliable source of information. These PTO presidents were also in a position to leverage their relationships with district-level contacts and arranged for more district administrators to attend school PTO meetings, make presentations, and answer PTO member questions.

The interviews with PTO presidents provided evidence of a ripple effect of information moving from participants in the LSV training back to the PTO organizations and school communities. This qualitative evidence was supported by the quantitative data from the PTO presidents' survey instrument, which reflected an increase in LSV awareness (and every other item included in this instrument) from the PTO 09-10 to PTO 10-11. The consistently lower mean scores from the PTO 10-11 cohort suggest increased awareness with the LSV training activities and information.

Phase 3: Archival Data

As evidence of the LSV training beyond the increased knowledge for individual participants, I compiled a variety of archival data documenting the presence and/or influence of activities related to LSV in the greater community. Documents were gathered from a variety of sources and have been categorized into the following levels: PTO, school district, legislature, community, and GSV. A summary of documents for each level is presented below. See Appendix I for a complete reference list of all documents cited as archival evidence with the appropriate URL for each.

Parent Teacher Organizations

Copies of PTO minutes from 4 schools (2 elementary schools and 2 middle schools) in SVVSD referenced reports or presentations by LSV or GSV members. GSV is an education advocacy group created by former LSV participants for the purpose of advocacy for education-related issues in SVVSD and the State of Colorado. The mention of LSV and GSV activities in the PTO meeting minutes was evidence of the ripple effect of activity and communication from LSV/GSV to school PTO groups.

1. Trail Ridge Middle School PTO minutes dated August 30, 2010, referenced a presentation by an LSV/GSV parent to the PTO membership on the topic of State of Colorado ballot Proposition 101 and proposed constitutional amendments 60 and 61. The presentation “. . . reviewed the current status of education funding in Colorado, the contents of these measures, and their impact to Colorado.” The minutes requested parent participation in a resolution asking the school board to publicly oppose the ballot initiatives. In addition to scheduling a future motion on the proposed resolution, the minutes noted interest in a school-wide informational meeting on the ballot initiatives.
2. Fall River Elementary School Communications Council (similar to PTO) meeting minutes dated September 13, 2010, documented that a parent GSV representative gave a presentation to the membership on the topic of Colorado Proposition 101 and proposed constitutional amendments 60 and 61. The minutes included Power Point slides with additional information about the state ballot issues.
3. Trail Ridge Middle School PTO meeting minutes dated October 4, 2010, stated that the school PTO approved a resolution asking the school board to oppose

Proposition 101 and constitutional amendments 60 and 61 for 2010 election.

Further noted was that the parent leading the effort was a GSV member and that 31 resolutions had been collected from school PTOs throughout the district.

4. The Niwot Elementary School/Parent Teacher Action Committee (or PTAC, the same as or similar to a PTO) meeting minutes dated May 2010, included a section delivered by an LSV/GSV member entitled "District Business." The minutes noted a report made to the PTAC members describing the DECIDE initiative, designed to enable Colorado legislators to increase taxes for public education. The minutes included an appreciation to the parents who traveled to Denver and testified on behalf of the DECIDE initiative at the statehouse.

School District

By providing parents with operational knowledge of the school district, and working relationships with school district influencers and decision-makers, the LSV training resulted in a larger pool of potential candidates for leadership positions in the school district. In 2012, a former LSV participant was one of two candidates for an open board position. The candidate with LSV experience was unanimously appointed to the board position.

1. Videotape of the board meeting of SVVSD dated February 15, 2012, captured the decision of the board of education members, who unanimously voted to appoint a former LSV participant, Joie Siegrist, to the Board. The qualifications of both candidates were cited, but Siegrist was selected based on her involvement in and knowledge of the school district.

Legislative

By providing participants the “know-how” and “know-who,” the LSV training was intended to position participants to competently engage in the state legislative processes that impacted public education in general and SVVSD specifically.

1. Videotape posted May 17, 2011, that depicted LSV participant, Laura McDonald, addressing the media at the state capitol in support of the “Bright Futures” initiative to raise taxes in Colorado in support of public education. Senator Rollie Heath sponsored the ballot initiative known as Proposition 103.
2. Letter from Lisa Wiel, policy director for Great Education Colorado, dated November 2, 2011, recognizing the efforts of St. Vrain parents who collected 5,000 signatures to help get Proposition 103 on the ballot for popular vote in November, 2011. The effort to collect these signatures in SVVSD was led by former LSV participants and GSV participants.
3. Quote by former LSV participant, Laura McDonald, in the Boulder Daily Camera, May 16, 2011, in reference to Senator Heath’s tax initiative in support of public education in Colorado: “Simply put, cutting schools and colleges is moving in the wrong direction. And just when you’re driving your car in the wrong direction, the longer you wait to do a U-turn, the longer it takes to get back to where you need to be” (Moreno, 2011).

Community

The ripple effect of LSV was reflected in the greater community of SVVSD as evidenced by the following examples of a growing presence in electronic and news media.

1. “Economist Tells SVVSD Parents, Slow Growth Ahead” (Camron, 2011). In this article, the reporter wrote about the presentation of State of Colorado chief economist, Natalie Mullis, to LSV participants. The presentation included projections of state funding cuts.
2. “SVVSD Parent Group Seeks Members” (Camron, 2011). In this article, the reporter wrote about the active participation in LSV by community members interested in learning about their school district. Stated in the article was this: “By applying, parents agree to act as liaisons between the committee and their schools.”
3. “Grassroots Group Wants Tax Measure on Ballot” (Camron, 2011). In this article, the reporter wrote about the activities of GSV members to raise awareness of a sales tax initiative to fund public education (i.e., Proposition 103). The reporter stated, “Since Colorado voters must prove that idea, a local group of parent volunteers known as Grassroots St. Vrain is gathering signatures to get the measure on the November ballot.”
4. Website: <http://grassrootsstvrain.wordpress.com>: The website of GSV, founded by former LSV participants. On the website, GSV was described as a non-partisan organization “. . . committed to informing and activating citizens on education related-issues in the greater St. Vrain Valley towns of Longmont, Niwot, Hygiene, Lyons, Mead, Erie, and the tri-town area of Dacono, Firestone, and Frederick, CO.”

Collectively, the archival documents provided further evidence of a growing ripple effect from LSV to the larger community. Formal presentations about the LSV

training were also provided at the request of the Colorado Association of School Boards, the Colorado Association of School Executives, and the Colorado School Public Relations Association to their respective conference attendees.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

When Americans reach out and their efforts are rebuffed, they usually throw up their hands and walk away.

David Mathews, 2006

There are relatively few instances in which citizens have proceeded successfully without some sort of assistance and support from experts who emerged to help them along the way.

Frank Fisher, 2009

In this chapter, major findings and a discussion of conclusions regarding this exploratory case study are provided based on the data presented in Chapter 4. Also included are implications for action, recommendations for research, and final reflections.

The inspiration for this study was based, in part, on a conversation that occurred between myself (a communications professional for SVVSD), and a man I'll call Bill. Bill was a long time friend who had lived in the community for many years and whose children had completed their primary and secondary schooling. During this conversation, we discussed Bill's perceptions about public education. I listened intently as he articulated his deep distrust of public schools. Bill did not believe the teachers and administrators in the public school system imparted the core values and academic rigor required for a successful life to children. People who worked in public schools were, he said, responsible to the government first and foremost, and not to what was best for kids. When I asked Bill if he would be willing to dedicate some time to a curriculum planning discussion, he said he doubted the district was interested in his opinions or his expertise, but, because we were friends, he would give it some thought and call me. Three years on...Bill had not called.

I understood why Bill had grown distrustful of public educators and their lack of motivation to engage citizens. As a public school employee, I had witnessed administrators orchestrate community meetings that resulted in no measurable outcomes. Worse were events for which there was no intention to work through issues with citizens, but were designed to satisfy the requirement for public input before implementing a plan developed by education professionals and consultants. I had witnessed the impact these perfunctory meetings had on citizens; their reactions ranged from reluctant acceptance to raw anger. Further, I had witnessed a growing distrust between citizens and district administrators, who tended to blame one another rather than working through the problems. I could see that citizens and administrators were not engaged, but rather stayed in their separate groups, like reluctant middle schoolers at a dance. Another, perhaps more apt metaphor, would be to compare citizens to third string athletes relegated to the bench while school administrators and education experts made all the plays.

Several researchers acknowledged the lack of data on efforts that successfully reversed the trends of citizen disengagement in public schools (Cohen & Rogers, 1983; Fung, 2004; Hirst, 1994). Kadlec and Friedman (2010) called for “systematic, longitudinal case studies that, like action research, can shed light on how citizens develop their views and their relationship with leaders in the context of their lived realities” (p. 108). This study was designed to address a gap in the research literature by studying a replicable strategy to systematically increase public participation in one school district. I hoped to mitigate the gap by collecting and interpreting data regarding a citizen training program—LSV—that was designed to provide knowledge about how the district operated (know-how), and opportunities for relationship building with its influential

decision makers (know-who), for the purpose of increasing public participation in the district.

Major Findings

Presented here are findings in response to each of the six research questions posed for this study.

Research Question 1: What knowledge did participants gain from the LSV training?

Results from the LSV survey instrument showed that a majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the LSV training had significantly increased their knowledge in all five topic areas of the knowledge domain: the school district's organizational structure (93%), instructional programs (85%), policies and practices (97%), school board's role (80%), and the State of Colorado's role in school funding (92%). The lowest level of agreement was for the school board's role, in which 80% of respondents marked the agreed or strongly agreed option on the 5-point Likert scale.

In the follow-up interviews, former LSV participants independently repeated a number of powerful insights related to the information provided in the training. For example, participants voiced an increased understanding of the district's role as distinct from the state's role in funding schools as a result of specific financial information provided in a presentation by the state economist (Natalie Mullis). One participant commented that the state's role was greater than they had expected; another said he realized he had not known enough before the presentation to even ask the right questions; others made reference to now understanding that regardless of district staff's efficiency with resources, the state legislature had financial control.

Another insight repeated by a significant number of LSV participants was a greater appreciation for the size of the district and the diversity of students and communities served. Several stated that prior to the LSV training, their experience with the district was limited to their children's school. Two participants reported feelings of pride about being part of a larger organization.

Several participants appreciated gaining sufficient knowledge about district operations to hold their school's principal accountable for statements that were contrary to information provided in the LSV training sessions. One participant mentioned the tendency of her neighborhood school principal to attribute unpopular decisions to the central district office, and thought that was done to avoid taking ownership for decisions.

Approximately half of the 10 former LSV participants who agreed to be interviewed for the qualitative portion of the study reported having the opportunity to use newly acquired knowledge to assist other parents who did not know with whom to speak to address a problem. Participants shared a variety of encounters with other parents—some at school committee meetings and some away from school—in which they were able to offer help or suggestions based on what they had learned or, in some cases, whom they had met.

The quantitative and qualitative findings for the knowledge domain indicated that the LSV training provided participants with a broader overall perspective that included increased understanding of district policies and practices, and increased understanding of the district's relationship to the state legislature. Based on their greater knowledge, participants were able to help other citizens solve school-related problems.

This effect was contradictory to the trend predicted in 1927 by John Dewey, the influential Progressive Era social scientist, who recognized that citizens would struggle to fulfill their democratic duties given the increasingly technical nature of American society (Fischer, 2009). Technical expertise began taking precedence in school-related matters. Some professional educators believed it was their job to coax citizens to accept new ways of thinking, while others unobtrusively excluded citizens from the decision-making processes (Mathews, 2006). Many educators felt that they alone knew what was best for children (Gurke, 2008), and thereby contributed to citizen alienation from school affairs. To protect their domains, educators ignored citizen inquiries into how schools operated (Salisbury, 1980). Insular and arrogant attitudes were widely reported in the research, and resulted in policies and practices that kept citizens uninformed, uninvolved, and alienated from the processes of school management and problem solving. Based on the findings of this study, the LSV training reversed those trends for individual participants.

Research Question 2: Were relationships between the participants and key influencers enhanced from the LSV training?

Results from the LSV survey instrument showed that a strong majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that because of the relationship-building opportunities made available through LSV, they were more likely to contact (or be contacted by) others in all five areas of the relationship domain: contact a friend or acquaintance about an education-related issue (82%), be contacted by a friend or acquaintance about an education-related issue (81%), contact the superintendent about an education-related issue (77%), contact a board member about an education-related issue (81%), and contact a state legislator about an education-related issue (67%).

Throughout follow-up interviews with the 10 former LSV members, nearly every reference to the superintendent and the board president was made using their first names. This may be the single most significant insight that can be inferred from the interviews. Multiple participants mentioned the high level of trust that resulted from the monthly LSV meetings and the access to superintendent and other district leaders that was provided. One participant said, “We felt we were important enough to listen to.” Another parent talked about consulting with one department head (who she referred to by first name) on a regular basis since meeting him at an LSV meeting; without the LSV training, she would never have known whom to call. Similarly, participants described the strong friendships they had developed with other participants, and the increased likelihood that they would contact other participants about an education-related issue. Two participants said they would never have made connections with certain other participants because they were so different; each described a transformation in their attitudes toward the other individuals. According to Farkas and Johnson (1993), an evolution from caution to respect among participants might represent an increased capacity for public participation when contrasted with the combative or estranged relationships that often occur among citizens.

While progressive education leaders across the country have been reassessing their relationships with citizens and exploring new engagement strategies, Mathews (2006) warned educators against seeing engagement as a one-time project. Instead, what citizens want is ongoing, face-to-face interaction with school officials. Gurke (2008) found that citizens wanted and needed to interact with officials informally and cultivate positive relationships.

Research has indicated that when citizens were successful in public participation processes, it was because experts provided assistance (Fischer, 2009). When the relationship between educators and citizens was strained, leaders became combative or estranged; rather than working for change everyone supported, they focused on rallying support for their side (Farkas & Johnson, 1993). The breakdown leads to uncomfortable confrontations and higher levels of distrust. Regrettably, citizens specifically identified administrators as their "greatest obstacle" to having a better relationship with their schools (Doble Research Associates, 2000, p. 2). Education leaders must invest time in making personal connections and building rapport with citizens; raising capacity for successful participation and collaboration cannot be achieved by a one-time event effort.

Research Question 3: Did participants report an increased willingness to be involved in education-related activities from the LSV training?

Citizens expressed a desire for face-to-face interactions with school officials (Mathews, 2006) and the opportunity to meet in informal settings (Gurke, 2008). But once they had the opportunity to meet informally with school officials and gain information, were they likely to increasingly engage in education-related activities?

Results from the LSV survey instrument showed a wider continuum of willingness to be engaged based on the five areas of the willingness domain: more likely to participate in informal conversations with others about education-related issues (96%), more likely to participate at PTO meetings or other school meetings (74%), more likely to participate at board of education meetings (63%), more likely to participate at legislative hearings at the state capitol (56%), more likely to seek a leadership position on a school or district committee (74%). The willingness continuum ranged from a high

agreement with informal activities decreasing as the activities became more formal and more distant from the local community.

A major insight revealed in the follow-up interviews with participants involved increased confidence. Approximately half of the interviewees said they felt a higher level of confidence with school district and education-related issues as a result of their LSV experience. One interviewee said, “I needed the confidence about knowing more about how the district worked and I needed the experience of putting myself out there a little bit more.” Another said she gained confidence to advocate for things in which she believed. Another felt she had learned to be more proactive rather than waiting for things to happen; another that she was no longer afraid to speak up. One participant described observing another participant operating outside her comfort zone by going to the state capitol to speak in front of legislative committees.

The data from this study supported previous research that found citizens wanted informal opportunities to interact with school officials face-to-face and to obtain assistance in understanding the complexities of the education system. By meeting with professionals and learning about the system, LSV participants gained confidence and willingness to participate in school affairs. The level of willingness, however, varied and may have depended on the formality of the participation and when and where the engagement took place. After decades of non-participation, citizens have begun speaking up with a renewed sense of power and willingness to advocate for what they believe is in their best interest. “Throughout most of our nation’s history, leaders have held a quasi-monopoly on decision making, but recent changes in cultural values have led people to insist on issues that affect their lives” (Yankelovich, 2010, p. 23).

Research Question 4: Did participants gain increased efficacy in collaborative problem solving from the LSV training?

Researchers found that citizens had become so detached from school affairs that they saw themselves as education consumers whose only responsibility was getting their children to and from school each day (Doble Research Associates, 2000). While Putnam (2000) attributed the steady disengagement of Americans from schools and other civic activities to a change in generational values, other researchers faulted an ever-increasing education bureaucracy that systematically disempowered citizens through court-ordered mandates, federal regulations, and expert governance. Government measures designed to strengthen schools and ensure their stability actually introduced a layer of complexity that made citizen participation less likely (Conley, 1993). School administrators believed their expertise, training, and knowledge was more important than that of citizens to determine policies in the best interests of the students (Gurke, 2008). One veteran educator said he had been trained to counter public interest rather than work with it (Mathews, 2006); others prevented outside influences from “messing with their plans” (Boo, 1992, p. 17). Not surprisingly, citizens reported being ignored and unappreciated after attempting to participate in controversial issues concerning their schools (Gurke, 2008).

Inviting citizens to deliberate on shared school-related problems has been shown to increase their understanding of the complex issues involved and allowed them to develop the skills of deliberation and judgment (Yankelovich & Friedman, 2010). A strong majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they had improved their skills in the five areas of the efficacy domain: making very difficult choices (97%), understanding parents with different perspectives on education-related issues (89%),

believing that parents with different perspectives led to better resolutions (92%), believing that despite different positions, consensus was possible (85%), and finding solutions frequently meant having uncomfortable conversations with people I disagreed with (97%).

In follow-up interviews, about half of the LSV interviewees articulated the challenges associated with deliberation. One parent described the challenge in terms of theory versus practice:

Okay, how can you be in a big room with all these people—everybody has a different background, no matter what, you have different experiences and different backgrounds...I thought it was great theory. But it was hard to take that away and do something with it.

Two interviewees discussed the challenge of getting people together to have a conversation rather than being mad at each other and not getting anywhere. Another asked, “How do you come to consensus with someone who is completely different-minded than you?” Other participants mentioned similar challenges, but in the context of particular backgrounds. One parent, an engineer by profession, discussed the difficulty communicating with other engineers about the complexities of school funding and stated, “...most people had similar views of districts that I had before I became involved...based on the outdated knowledge of going to school in the ‘60s and ‘70s, not the way things are now.” Another participant with an MBA described the difficulty of conveying the unique challenges of managing public schools: “When you have people coming from a more business-type background, where they are making widgets, insurance, or something, a lot of the same techniques don’t apply.”

The quantitative findings for the efficacy domain indicated strong agreement on the relationship between the LSV training experience and acquisition of public

participation skills. The interview data suggested that participants understood the difficulty of putting these skills into action. The LSV training experience clearly increased the level of public participation in the district, and increased awareness among participants of the fundamental skills needed for collaboration and deliberative problem solving. Neither school officials nor citizens can be expected to become seasoned participants in their school districts quickly; both parties must improve their capacities for public participation by proactively strengthening their participatory skills.

Research Question 5: What new education-related actions did participants do after their involvement in the LSV training?

The premise of this study was that by providing citizens knowledge of how the school district operated (know-how) and relationship-building opportunities with key decision makers (know-who), district administrators could systematically increase citizens' capacity for public participation. Similar to the findings in the willingness domain, responses to items in the action domain suggested a continuum of actions taken by LSV participants after the training related to the specific activity: volunteered my time at a school or district event (100%), asked another parent or community member to participate in a school or district-related initiative (92%), was involved in an education-related state legislative initiative (88%), shared knowledge about school district-related information with my school PTO (88%), made a financial contribution to a school or district-related initiative (85%), communicated with the superintendent or member of the board of education about an education-related issue (81%), supported the campaign of a candidate based in part on education-related issues (73%), wrote about a school district-related issue on a blog, Facebook, Twitter, or another social media site (69%), asked

another parent or community member to make a financial contribution to a school or district-related initiative (42%), and submitted a letter to the editor of a local newspaper concerning a school district-related issue (27%). The continuum of yes responses appeared to be based on personal comfort levels with various activities. Understandably, making one's beliefs known to friends and acquaintances and publishing them for an unknown number of citizens to read involved different levels of personal comfort. The same would be true about making a donation to a cause one believed in versus asking others to donate to the same cause.

In follow-up interviews, all of the LSV participants described sharing knowledge with friends, acquaintances, PTO members, and school board members after getting involved with the training. Actions ranged from including information in school newsletters to testifying before state legislators. One participant said that the nature of conversations with colleagues changed after getting involved with LSV: "I would have had some of those conversations, but they probably would have been more of a chiming in or agreeing or disagreeing at a lunchtime conversation rather than an informative conversation." Another participant described feeling more empowered to engage after LSV because she was more informed. Two parents said their level of involvement had not increased, but reported being involved at higher levels. One said, "It's not just PTO any more. It's meeting with all PTOs, or meeting with community leaders, or meeting with people in Denver—for the same purposes, it's just higher and higher." The parent went on to say that the more information she had, the more she saw her role change in terms of how high up the political ladder she had to go with the information. Another factor that may have determined how high up the ladder she went was family history.

Schlozman (2002) found that a citizen's willingness to participate in public activities correlated with family background and money rather than innate intelligence.

Another meaningful insight from the interviews was gaining information about GSV, a group that former LSV participants founded. One parent described GSV as a platform to distribute information about school district-related issues and engage parents and others in advocacy work. It was also described as a, "communication group that tries to share current events, knowledge about the business of education, about what's going on in the education industry, and how that's going to impact our schools." The majority of interviewees mentioned having some connection with the group, but several described being especially proactive in outreach activities for GSV. The LSV training was cited as directly related to getting involved with GSV. For example, one parent said, "That [LSV] made me feel more comfortable about getting involved in Grassroots, and in doing campaigning, educating, talking to parents, getting petitions signed, going to speak at parent groups, emails, all kinds of things that I would say are on a broader level." Several LSV participants described their involvement in citizen lobbying efforts, such as organizing letter writing campaigns and testifying about an education-related issue at the state capitol. Two parents described the transformation in their behavior as having a "trickle-down effect," suggesting that their experience in LSV—gaining valuable school district information and relationships with key decision makers—had an impact on the broader community.

Overall, the quantitative and qualitative data relative to the action domain suggested increased levels of action among the LSV participants with 24 participants taking between 5 and 10 new actions and 3 participants taking 4 or fewer new actions as

shown on Table 23. Some individuals reported becoming active at new levels of involvement, such as speaking at all the PTO meetings (not just their own), and lobbying at the state capitol and with other advocacy groups in Denver.

Research Question 6: Have participants impacted education- and district-related issues in the greater community as a result of the LSV training?

To obtain data to indicate whether the LSV training had an impact beyond the LSV participants, I surveyed former volunteers who served as PTO presidents at schools throughout the district at the time of the LSV trainings. To item “I am aware of the school district’s training program for parents called Leadership St. Vrain,” 65% of the respondents ($n = 20$) answered yes. To item “At least one member of our PTO shared information at a PTO meeting that was attributed to Leadership St. Vrain,” 63% responded yes. To item “Members of our school PTO routinely discussed information from Leadership St. Vrain at our PTO meetings,” 40% said yes. Data resulting from independent t -tests of the two PTO president cohort groups indicated the PTO 09-10 cohort had a higher mean for each survey item ($M^a = 2.28$) than the PTO 10-11 cohort mean response ($M^a = 1.63$). These findings suggested an overall increase in the awareness among PTO presidents about LSV and knowledge attributed to LSV from the first year to the second year of the LSV training program.

Phase 3

The supplementary archival data examined in this study provided additional insight into the dissemination of information by LSV participants to individuals, groups, and communities outside the LSV training program. These documents included:

- PTO minutes that documented presentations by former LSV members at PTO meetings.
- Statements given by former LSV members at legislative hearings.
- Evidence of the founding of GSV.
- Newspaper articles quoting former LSV participants on education-related legislative and election issues.
- A newspaper article announcing the appointment of a former LSV participant to the board of education.

LSV participants shared information with other parents who did not participate in LSV, as well as neighbors, friends, and acquaintances, PTO members, the media, and elected officials. LSV participants also assisted non-LSV parents with specific school-related problems. Further, LSV participants created GSV, a parent-led advocacy group for the purpose of sharing information with parents and other citizens on education-related topics and issues pertinent to their schools and community.

Assumptions

This study was based on the premise that a public school district administrators can systematically increase capacity for public participation by offering a training program to provide citizens with information about school district operations (know-how) and relationship-building opportunities with key influencers associated with the school district (know-who). It was assumed that the concepts of know-how and know-who were equally valid terms of value and parents and other citizens with increased levels of know-how and know-who would be more effective participants in school- and district-related activities that required collaboration and problem solving. A further assumption was that

the district superintendent, leadership team, and board were supportive of public participation theory and practices, and embodied skills conducive to optimizing public participation, collaborative problem solving, and deliberation in the school district and surrounding communities. Both of these were confirmed assumptions based on the data from the study.

Limitations

The quantitative survey instruments developed for this study were unique and untested. It is unknown whether the data produced can be generalized to other populations under similar study conditions, or whether the domains studied (i.e., knowledge, relationship, willingness, efficacy, action) adequately measured the experience of the LSV participants and were predictive of the district's capacity for public participation.

Another limitation was that the qualitative data obtained were obtained from face-to-face follow-up interviews from a small sample of individuals and may not be an accurate reflection of the voice of all people.

A third limitation was possible researcher bias. I was, at the time of this research (and at the time of this writing), executive director of communications for SVVSD, I designed the LSV training with a parent colleague, and was familiar with each of the training participants. To temper bias, the participants were largely unaware of the study hypotheses and I used anonymous quantitative survey instruments with the LSV and PTO participants. Additionally, I collected quantitative and qualitative data from individuals serving on school PTO committees who were unknown to me. In addition, I included data

found in archival materials produced, published, or otherwise made available by entities unrelated to the LSV training and myself.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine if a school district can increase public participation through a training program that provided citizens information about how the school district operated, as well as opportunities to develop personal relationships with school administrators, elected officials, and other leaders who manage schools and influence education policy. Previous researchers acknowledged the lack of data regarding efforts that successfully reversed the trends of citizen disengagement from public schools (Cohen & Rogers, 1983; Fung, 2004; Hirst, 1994). In addition, Yankelovich (2010) called for “systematic, longitudinal case studies that, like action research, can shed light on how citizens develop their views and their relationship with leaders in the context of their lived realities” (p. 108). The purpose was achieved. The quantitative and qualitative findings provided evidence that know-how and know-who increased as a result of participants’ LSV training experiences. The measures included increased knowledge about the school district, strengthened relationships with key district influencers, increased willingness for involvement, increased actions in district and education-related issues, increased efficacy in public participation skills, and specific actions that participants took and attributed to the training. These specific actions caused a secondary effect that reached the larger community including schools, community events, education advocacy efforts, and state legislative initiatives.

Implications for School Administrators

A key element to the overall impact of the LSV training was the executive leadership of the district—the superintendent, the superintendent’s leadership team, and the board president—as evidenced by the repeated references made by LSV participants about their consistent availability, credibility, and support. While the data indicated that the training curriculum and experience had an effect on the participants, these findings would have been diminished if an organizational culture that valued public participation had not existed. Among members of the district leadership team, the superintendent maintained expectations concerning deliberative problem solving and he recognized the efforts of staff to proactively ensure citizens were involved in district business.

To effectively advance the cause of public participation, we cannot expect the public to be the prime mover and sustainer of an institution’s participatory culture. Fischer (2009) stated, “There are relatively few instances in which citizens have proceeded successfully without some sort of assistance and support from experts who emerged to help them along the way” (p. 110). Having trusted advocates within the district—leaders to whom citizens can turn for accurate information, reciprocity, and rapport—is the ingredient that provides a viable environment for meaningful public participation. Without that, trainings such as LSV would not provide measurable value.

Today’s local, state, and national media culture, much of which has supplanted traditional journalism standards with *gotcha* reporting (i.e., reporting designed to inflame partisanship and controversy), and infotainment, intensifies the need for leaders that proactively inform and engage citizens. The tendency for today’s media leaders to limit access to a broad range of perspectives and information makes the role of participatory

practitioners even more critical. Fishkin (2009) agreed with this perspective and argued that instead of becoming broadly informed about an issue and exposed to how others think, citizens were more likely to be exposed to people who shared their opinions and were, therefore, more likely to be manipulated. While it may be counterintuitive that we have *less* information about the interests and beliefs of our fellow citizens, or that the media supplants the role of citizens, this is what is occurring in communities across the country. The expansion of online communications, social media tools, and other technology advances may be exacerbating divisions among citizens with opposing political identifications (Bishop, 2005). As citizens become more insular in their beliefs, the need for leaders who believe in participatory decision-making and the need for citizens who are willing to hone their skills as participants will increase. Because public school communities are particularly vulnerable to divisive disputes, school leaders and citizens will need skills to effectively navigate conflicting values and competing priorities.

My professional goal for this study was to identify strategies that made the school district a more welcoming place for people like Bill, my friend who had lost faith in the public schools. He felt like an outsider in the school district, someone whose ideas were not valued and not welcomed. For school districts to be relevant to all citizens, school leaders must understand that people like Bill have something valuable to contribute. Like most caring citizens, Bill has a wealth of experience, that, combined with the experience of others who participate in well facilitated public participation processes, can be brought to focus on complex problems in need of sustainable solutions.

Citizens must accept that public schools and public education systems are complex institutions intended to serve the needs of all Americans. They are operated in a highly scrutinized, and highly politicized, regulated, and litigated environment. And just as school officials must be open to informing and engaging their communities, citizens must be willing to invest time in understanding of public education policy, build rapport with school officials and other key influencers in education, and strengthen their public participation skills.

Further Research

Studies based on the LSV 11-12, LSV 12-13 and PTO cohorts would be a logical follow-up to this research. At the time of this writing, parents are completing the LSV 11-12 training and a new parent volunteer has agreed to serve as chair for the LSV 12-13 cohort. Valuable insights might be gained if the findings from subsequent LSV cohorts are compared to the findings reported in this study.

Another area of potential research would be to examine the LSV domains to more fully understand the experience of the LSV participants and the subsequent impact on continued public participation in district issues. Additional research of these topics would be valuable, particularly if conducted in a variety of school districts, communities, and demographic groups with different values and cultural norms, including adults whose children are grown.

Another potential research topic would be to examine the programs and public participation training for district leaders and board of education members and, in particular, the acquisition of leadership and facilitation skills in areas such as deliberative problem solving and facilitation practices. Also of research interest is the attitudes of

administrators and school board members who are working more closely with citizens. How will they, the education experts and elected officials, be affected by engaging citizens like Bill. Finally, another area of future research is the comfort levels of citizens and school administrators who participate in public participation and the willingness to be involved in activities outside their respective comfort zones, and what influences their comfort?

Reflections

In 2009, two parents and I visited Colorado State Representative Jack Pommer in his office at the state capitol, shortly before he was term-limited out of office. After he summarized for us the status of school funding and the series of annual education cuts about to begin, I asked him how often parents from around the state came to the capitol to speak with him about school issues. “Never,” he said, “You’re the first.” We were not prepared for that response. He went on to say that he routinely heard from lobbyists, the oil and gas industry, the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, and the Colorado Education Association; but never parents coming to speak with him about their kid’s school. “Parents don’t seem to see the connection with the legislature and I don’t think they get what’s been going on down here,” he said.

In recent years, educators have witnessed a series of far-reaching education reform measures introduced in state legislatures across the nation, including an expansion of teacher pay-for-performance schemes, the expansion of high stakes standardized testing, and a growing number of initiatives designed to provide families with publicly-funded vouchers for schools of choice. Most have appealing titles like “Concerning Ensuring Quality Instruction Through Educator Effectiveness” (Colorado Senate Bill 10-

191). Despite huge financial implications for an already underfunded education system, bills like this are often adopted into law without reliable empirical data to suggest that the investment will achieve quality instruction.

It is my hope that this study will add to a growing body of research promoting effective citizen participation in public schools and other civic institutions for the overall improvement of our communities and engagement with each other.

“What determines the quality of our schools is our involvement.”

- LSV Parent (2012)

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APPENDIX A: ST. VRAIN VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT DESCRIPTION

SVVSD is located in northern Colorado and encompasses an area of approximately 410 square miles. The district serves approximately 27,000 students residing in portions of Boulder, Weld, Larimer, and Broomfield Counties. The municipalities within the district's service include Longmont, Niwot, Erie, Lyons, Hygiene, Mead, Frederick, Firestone, and Dacono. The region is a mix of suburban and rural communities with established industries in high tech research and development, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, aerospace, and agriculture. District enrollment continues to increase by approximately 3% annually and the region is expected to see significant additional population growth. At the time of this study, the district is home to 52 schools (26 elementary schools, 9 middle schools, 1 middle/senior school, 8 high schools, 2 alternative high schools, and 6 charter schools) with two new schools (a new elementary and a replacement high school) under construction. Approximately 30% of the student population belongs to ethnic minority groups, the largest being Hispanic.

In November 2008, a mill levy was passed to benefit SVVSD: an override in the amount of \$16.5 million (annual revenue increase) and a capital improvement bond in the amount of \$189 million. These additional funds have provided significant assistance to SVVSD programs at a time when the State of Colorado has cut funding for PreK-12 education by reducing per pupil funding. This reduction of funding between 2009 and 2012 was approximately \$23 million. In 2010, SVVS students outperformed the state average in 93% of the Colorado Standards Assessment Program (CSAP) tests, and 80% of SVVSD schools were ranked in the top two accreditation levels: distinction or performance.

The following colleges and universities are located in close proximity to the district: Front Range Community College, the University of Colorado, Colorado State University, the University of Northern Colorado, the University of Denver, Metropolitan State College of Denver, and Regis University.

APPENDIX B: LSV PARTICIPANT SURVEY

C1 Dear Parent,

This survey is designed to obtain information about your experience in Leadership St. Vrain (LSV). There are no known risks or benefits to you for participation; however, we hope to gain important insight into parent participation in schools. The survey will take you no longer than 20 minutes and is completely voluntary. You can move forward and backward in the survey by using the arrow key, and you may skip any questions that you would prefer not to respond to. You may withdraw consent and stop participation at any time without penalty. The electronic survey is designed to keep your responses anonymous, and they will be encrypted on transfer. That means that your responses and your email information will be kept separate. Not even members of the research team will know which responses came from you. After completing the survey, you will be directed to another screen where you will be asked if you would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview. If you agree, you will be asked to provide your contact information. Your responses and email address will not be connected in any way. By clicking YES below, you acknowledge that you have read the information stated above and willingly agree to consent to participating in this survey. You may also request a copy of this consent agreement for your records. If you have any questions about the study, please contact John Poynton at 303-591-6141. If you have questions about your rights as a volunteer, please contact Janell Barker, CSU Human Research Administrator, at 970-491-1381. Thank you.

YES

NO

C2 By selecting NO, you have chosen not to participate in this survey. If you have any questions, you may contact John Poynton at 303-591-6141. Please advance to the next page to complete the survey. Thank you.

C3 Thank you for consenting to participate in this survey. **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the introductory statement at the top of each section then read the concluding statements that follow and click on the level of agreement that best reflects your experience. At the end of each section you will have an opportunity to provide written comments.

B2 Leadership St. Vrain (LSV) has significantly improved my knowledge of...

Q1 the school district's organizational structure.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q2 the school district's instructional programs.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q3 the school district's overall policies and practices.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q4 the school board's role in the district.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q5 the State of Colorado's role in school funding.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q6 In the box below, please share additional comments related to the topics mentioned in this section.

B3 Because of relationship-building opportunities made available to me in LSV...

Q7 I am more likely to contact a friend or acquaintance about an education-related issue.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q8 Friends and acquaintances are more likely to contact me about an education-related issue.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q9 I am more likely to contact the superintendent about an education-related issue.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q10 I am more likely to contact a board member about an education-related issue.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q11 I am more likely to contact a state legislator about an education-related issue.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q12 In the box below, please share additional comments related to the topics mentioned in this section.

B4 Because of my participation with LSV...

Q13 I am more likely to participate in informal conversations with others about education-related issues.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q14 I am more likely to participate at Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) or other school committee meetings.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q15 I am more likely to participate at Board of Education meetings.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q16 I am more likely to participate at legislative hearings at the state capitol.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q17 I am more likely to seek a leadership position on a school or district-related committee.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q18 In the box below, please share additional comments related to the topics mentioned in this section.

B5 To some degree, it is from my experience with LSV that...

Q19 I know that finding solutions to school district-related challenges frequently requires making very difficult choices.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q20 I have a greater understanding of parents whose perspectives on education-related issues are different from mine.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q21 I believe that if parents with different perspectives are involved in solving school district-related challenges, we'll get better resolutions.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q22 Even though another parent might have a completely different position from mine about an education-related issue, I believe we could reach a consensus.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q23 I understand that finding solutions to controversial problems frequently means having uncomfortable conversations with people that I disagree with.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q24 In the box below, please share additional comments related to the topic mentioned in this section.

B6 After getting involved with LSV, I have done these things...

Q25 Shared knowledge about school district-related information with my school PTO.

- Yes
- No

Q26 Written about a school district-related issue on Facebook, Twitter, a blog or another social media site.

- Yes
- No

Q27 Submitted a letter to the editor of a local newspaper concerning a school district-related issue.

- Yes
- No

Q28 Was involved in an education-related state legislative initiative.

- Yes
- No

Q29 Communicated with the superintendent or member of the board of education about an education-related issue.

- Yes
- No

Q30 Volunteered my time at a school or district event.

- Yes

No

Q31 made a financial contribution to a school or district-related initiative.

Yes

No

Q32 Asked another parent or community member to participate in a school or district-related initiative.

Yes

No

Q33 Asked another parent or community member to make a financial contribution to a school or district-related initiative.

Yes

No

Q34 Supported the campaign of a candidate based in part on education-related issues.

Yes

No

Q35 In the box below, please share additional comments related to the topics mentioned in this section.

B7 Rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

36 The superintendent's updates at LSV were valuable.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

37 The school board president's presentation at LSV was valuable.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

38 Overall, LSV presentations about district departments (examples: student services, financial services, operations and maintenance) were valuable.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

39 Overall, LSV presentations by state officials (examples: state legislators, state economist) were valuable.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

40 Overall, getting to know parent representatives from other schools was valuable.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

41 In the box below, please share additional comments related to the topics mentioned in this section.

B8 Evaluating your LSV experience:

42 LSV has increased my knowledge of school district operations.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

43 LSV has expanded my relationship with local and state education officials.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

44 LSV has strengthened my problem-solving skills in education-related issues.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

45 LSV has caused me to become more involved in school and/or district-related issues

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

46 I would recommend LSV to friends and acquaintances.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

47 In the box below, please share additional comments related to the topics mentioned in this section.

B9 Information about you:

48 My gender is:

- Male
- Female

49 I was a member of LSV for the following school year:

- 2009-2010
- 2010-2011

50 I first learned of LSV from a:

- Friend
- Newspaper
- School website
- PTO member
- Teacher
- Principal
- Superintendent
- Board member

- Newsletter
- Other

B10 Willingness to discuss LSV in more detail:

51 The Communications Director for the St. Vrain Valley School District, John Poynton, is researching the role that training and relationship-building might play in raising parent involvement in school affairs. John intends to include the data in a dissertation study that will help inform parents, education officials, and researchers about strategies to increase parent involvement in our schools. John hopes to conduct interviews with a number of former Leadership St. Vrain graduates who are willing to discuss their experiences in the training. Information about your experience could be extremely helpful. All interviews will be under an hour in length and remain confidential. Would you be willing to share additional information about your experience related to LSV in a confidential interview?

- Yes
- No

52 Thank you for your willingness to participate in a follow-up interview. Please provide your name, your best phone number(s), and an updated email address if necessary. The names and identities of interviewees will be kept confidential and will not be reported in any presentations, reports or published records. After you have provided your information in the spaces below, please advance to the next page to submit your responses.

Name

Phone

Email

Thank you for taking this survey. Your answers will be anonymous. Please advance to the next page to submit the survey.

APPENDIX C: PTO PRESIDENT SURVEY

Q0 Dear Parent:

This survey is designed to obtain information about your experience in Leadership St. Vrain (LSV). There are no known risks or benefits to you for participation; however, we hope to gain important insight into parent participation in schools. The survey will take you no longer than 5 minutes and is completely voluntary. You can move forward and backward in the survey by using the arrow key, and you may skip any questions that you would prefer not to respond to. You may withdraw consent and stop participation at any time without penalty. The electronic survey is designed to keep your responses anonymous, and they will be encrypted on transfer. That means that your responses and your email information will be kept separate. Not even members of the research team will know which responses came from you. After completing the survey, you will be directed to another screen where you will be asked if you would be interested in participating in a follow-up interview. If you agree, you will be asked to provide your contact information. Your responses and email address will not be connected in any way. By clicking YES below, you acknowledge that you have read the information stated above and willingly agree to participate in this survey. You may also request a copy of this consent agreement for your records. If you have any questions about the study, please contact John Poynton at 303-591-6141. If you have questions about your rights as a volunteer, please contact Janell Barker, CSU Human Research Administrator, at 970-491-1381. Thank you.

Yes

No

QA By selecting NO, you have chosen not to participate in this survey. If you have any questions, you may contact John Poynton at 303-591-6141. Please advance to the next page to exit the survey.

QB Thank you for consenting to participate in this survey.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read the following statements and click on the response that best reflects your experience. At the end of the section you will have an opportunity to provide written comments about your experience. Your feedback is very important.

Q1 I am aware of the school district's training program for parents called Leadership St.

Vrain.

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

Q2 I know a parent (other than myself) who has been involved in the Leadership St.

Vrain training.

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

Q3 When I was a PTO president, at least one other PTO parent had been involved with

Leadership St. Vrain.

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

Q4 Members of our school PTO routinely discussed information from Leadership St.

Vrain at our PTO meetings.

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

Q5 At least one member of our PTO shared information at a PTO meeting that was

attributed to Leadership St. Vrain.

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

Q6 I am aware that members of Leadership St. Vrain frequently met with the

superintendent of schools.

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

Q7 I am aware that members of Leadership St. Vrain frequently met with school board members or other elected officials.

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

Q8 I think members of Leadership St. Vrain obtained valuable information about school district affairs in their trainings.

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

Q9 Leadership St. Vrain favorably impacted our school's PTO during my time as PTO president.

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

Q10 I would recommend Leadership St. Vrain to other PTO members and parents.

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

Q11 In the box below, please share your comments about Leadership St. Vrain.

B2 Information about you:

Q12 My gender is:

- Male
- Female

Q13 I was president of my school PTO during all or most of the following school year(s)

- 2009-2010
- 2010-2011

B3 Your willingness to participate in a follow-up interview about Leadership St. Vrain:

Q14 The Communications Director for the St. Vrain Valley School District, John Poynton, is researching the role that training and relationship-building might play in raising parent involvement in schools.

John intends to include the data in a dissertation study that will help inform parents, education officials, and researchers about strategies to increase parent involvement in our schools. John hopes to conduct interviews with PTO presidents about their knowledge, insights or observations about Leadership St. Vrain. Information about your experience could be valuable. All interviews will be under an hour in length and remain confidential. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview about Leadership St. Vrain and parent involvement in our schools?

Yes

No

M2 Thank you for your willingness to participate in a follow-up interview. Please provide your name, best phone number, and updated email address if necessary. The names and identities of interviewees will be kept confidential and will not be reported in any presentations, reports or published records. After providing your information in the spaces below, please advance to the next page to submit the survey.

Name

Phone

Email

M1 Thank you for participating in this survey. Your responses will be anonymous. Please advance to next page to exit the survey.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in a Research Study Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: Organizational Training and Relationship Building as Effective Tools for Increasing the Capacity for Public Participation in a Public School District

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Donald Venneberg, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
School of Education & Human Resource Studies
214 Education Building
1588 Campus Delivery
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1588
Phone: 970-491-2965

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

John Poynton
Doctoral Candidate
School of Education & Human Resource Studies
1217 Venice St.
Longmont, CO 80501
Phone: 303-591-6141

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You recently completed an online survey about your involvement with the parent training called Leadership St. Vrain, and indicated that you would be willing to participate in an interview. This study involves two groups of parents: parents who've participated in the Leadership St. Vrain training and parents who've served as presidents of their school parent teacher organization. The researcher wants to learn more about your experience as an involved citizen who cares about your child's school and the St. Vrain Valley School District in general.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

John Poynton, Co-Principal Investigator
Donald Venneberg Ph.D., Principal Investigator

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to measure whether the parent training known as leadership St. Vrain was successful in giving parents valuable information about how school districts operate and helping parents strengthen relationships with key decision makers like the superintendent, board president and other education leaders.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The study consists of an initial survey that you completed online and a series of one-on-one interviews. The interviews will take place in the Spring semester of 2012 at one of the schools, the public library, or at another location that's convenient to you, and will last about one (1) hour.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

You will participate in a one-on-one interview with the Co-PI, John Poynton. The researcher will be asking you questions about your experience in the Leadership St. Vrain program. You don't have to answer any question that you would rather not answer. The researcher will be audio taping the interview with your permission.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You should not take this survey if your level of participation in Leadership St. Vrain or your school Parent Teacher Organization was low.

If you were a member of Leadership St. Vrain but you were unable to attend a training session or dropped out shortly after the start of the training and never returned.

If you were elected President of your Parent Teacher Organization but you were unable to fulfill your leadership obligations of complete your term

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

There are no known risks associated with this study and, while it is not possible to identify all potential risks in a research procedure, the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no known immediate and direct benefits to you for participating in this study. There is a potential benefit for your school, school district and community by increasing parent involvement in public education. Previous research studies show that schools and school districts with high levels of parent involvement have, among other benefits, higher levels of student achievement and community support.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

We will keep private all research records that identify you. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, John Poynton, at 303-591-6141. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on February 8, 2012.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

If you agree to participate in a follow-up interview, please know that the researcher plans to audiotape and transcribe the interview. The audio recording will be destroyed and the transcription will be identified with a code without reference to your name.

Do you give the researcher permission to audio tape your interview?

- Yes, you may audio tape my interview
- No, please do not audio tape my interview.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

John Poynton

Name of person providing information to participant

Date

Signature of Research Staff

APPENDIX E: LSV INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

Name of Study: Organizational Training and Relationship Building as Effective Tools for Increasing the Capacity for Public Participation in a Public School District.

Researchers: Principal Investigator, Donald Venneberg, Ph.D.
Co-Principal Investigator, John Poynton, M.S.

Document: Follow-up interview questions for subjects who participated in the Leadership St. Vrain (LSV) training

LSV Interview Questions:

1. How would you describe, in general, your experience with the Leadership St. Vrain (or LSV) training?
2. Can you identify any specific information that you learned as a result of LSV that you believe was particularly valuable?
 - ⇒ If “yes” to question 2, follow-up: For you, what makes this information valuable, and how might you use it?
 - ⇒ Have you shared this information with others, and if so who?
 - ⇒ Does knowing this information impact you personally, and if so how might it impact you?
 - ⇒ If “no” to question 2, follow-up: Is there other more valuable information you believe should be included in LSV?
3. Did you develop new school-related connections with anyone as a result of LSV, and if so who?
 - ⇒ If “yes” to question 3, follow-up: Do you consider these connections valuable, and if so why?
 - ⇒ Overall, has your connection with district administrators or elected officials changed as a result of LSV, and if so how?
 - ⇒ If “no” to question 3, follow-up: Do you think the LSV training failed to provide opportunities to connect with other parents, district staff and other officials?
 - ⇒ Do you have recommendations for improving this aspect (making valuable connections) of the LSV training?
4. Since completing the LSV training, would you describe yourself as being more open to being involved in school district

related activities, less open to being involved, or about the same?

⇒ If “yes” to question 4, (less or more involved) follow up: Has your current level of openness to being involved in school district affairs been impacted, one way or another, by LSV, and if so explain?

⇒ If “no” to question 4, follow-up: Do you think the LSV training could have done something to positively impact your willingness to be more involved in schools or district-related affairs?

5. Since completing the LSV training has your actual involvement (not just your willingness) with schools, the district and/or other education-related activities increased, decreased or stayed about the same?

⇒ If “yes” to question 5, follow-up: Describe the new activities you have been involved in since LSV.

⇒ If “no” or “the same” to question 5, follow-up: Is there something the school or school district could do to cause you to increase your involvement?

6. The LSV training modules addressed issues related to the superintendent’s update, board governance, school funding and budgets, the legislature, student curriculum and student achievement, student services, athletics, and safety and security.

⇒ Which of these topics do you believe were valuable to you?

⇒ Which of these topics do you believe were not valuable to you?

⇒ Are there topics that you would definitely add or eliminate?

⇒ Overall, any comments or concerns about the presenters?

7. How would you summarize the overall value of your LSV training experience?

APPENDIX F: PTO INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

- Name of Study: Organizational Training and Relationship Building as Effective Tools for Increasing the Capacity for Public Participation in a Public School District.
- Researchers: Principal Investigator, Donald Venneberg, Ph.D.
Co-Principal Investigator, John Poynton, M.S.
- Document: Follow-up interview questions for subjects who served as president of their school parent teacher organization (PTO)

PTO Interview Questions:

1. During your term as president of your school PTO, did you receive any information about the parent training called Leadership St. Vrain or LSV?
 - ⇒ If “yes” to question 1: follow-up: Can you remember what information you received and from whom?
 - ⇒ Did other members of the school PTO discuss LSV and, if so, do you recall what they discussed?
 - ⇒ If “no” to question 1, proceed with **Question Plan B** below.
2. Can you identify any specific information that you learned as a result of the LSV training that you, as PTO president, believe was particularly valuable?
 - ⇒ If “yes” to question 2, follow-up: For you, what made this information valuable?
 - ⇒ Did you share this information with others, and if so with whom and how?
 - ⇒ Did knowing that information impact you and other members of the PTO, and if so how?
 - ⇒ If “no” to question 2, follow-up: Do you think a parent training at the district level would be valuable to parents, and if so what topics would it include?
3. Did you, another PTO member, or anyone at your school develop new school-related connections with anyone as a result of LSV, and if so who?
 - ⇒ If “yes” to question 3, follow-up: follow-up: Do you consider these connections valuable, and if so why?
 - ⇒ Overall, has your connection with other parents, district administrators or elected officials changed as a result of LSV, and if so how?
 - ⇒ If “no,” follow-up: Do you think the LSV training failed to provide opportunities to connect with other

parents, district staff and other officials?

4. Since the LSV training was initiated, would you say that parents are more open to being involved in school district related activities, less open to being involved, or about the same?
 - ⇒ If “yes” (more open or less open to involvement) to question 4: follow up: What would you attribute the change to?
 - ⇒ If “the same,” follow-up: Do you think the LSV training could have done something to positively impact the willingness of parents to be more involved in schools, the district, or other education-related issues?

5. Since the LSV training was initiated, would you say that actual parent involvement (not just your willingness) with schools, the district and/or other education-related activities has increased, decreased or stayed about the same?
 - ⇒ If “yes” to question 5, follow-up: Describe your reasons for saying this.
 - ⇒ If “no” or “the same” to question 5, follow-up: Do you believe a parent training such as LSV could ever be successful in increasing parent involvement in schools, the district or other education-related issues?

6. The LSV training included information related to the superintendent’s monthly update, board governance, school funding and budgets, the legislature, student curriculum and student achievement, student services, athletics, and safety and security.
 - ⇒ Do you believe that these are relevant topics to parents?
 - ⇒ Any not valuable to parents?
 - ⇒ Are there topics that you would definitely add or eliminate?

Question Plan B

1. How would you describe the level of involvement of parents at your school when you served as president?
2. How would you describe the level of involvement of parents who served on the PTO when you served as president?
3. Do you think PTO members and other parents would have benefited from a district training that provided information about how the district operates?

⇒ If “yes” to question 1, follow up: Why do you think this would be useful and what training topics would be most valuable to include in the training, and why?

4. Do you think PTO members and other parents would have benefited from a district training that provided opportunities to meet district administrators, board members, legislators, and other education officials when you served as PTO president?

⇒ If “yes” to question 2, follow-up: Which administrators, elected officials, or other education officials do you believe they would have benefitted from knowing, and why?

Do you have any other recommendations about how the school or school district could help increase the level of parent involvement in activities related to schools, the district, and education-related issues in general?

APPENDIX G: IRB APPROVAL



Research Integrity & Compliance Review Office
Office of the Vice President for Research
321 General Services Building - Campus Delivery 2011 Fort Collins,
CO
TEL: (970) 491-1553
FAX: (970) 491-2293

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DATE: February 08, 2012
TO: Venneberg, Donald, 1588 School of Education
Poynton, John, 1588 School of Education, Oltjenbruns, Kevin, 1588 School of Education
FROM: Barker, Janell, , CSU IRB 2
PROTOCOL TITLE: Organizational Training and Relationship Building as Effective Tools for Increasing the Capacity for Public Participation in a Public School District
FUNDING SOURCE: NONE
PROTOCOL NUMBER: 11-3117H
APPROVAL PERIOD: Approval Date: February 08, 2012 Expiration Date: February 07, 2013

The CSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled: Organizational Training and Relationship Building as Effective Tools for Increasing the Capacity for Public Participation in a Public School District. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol. This protocol must be reviewed for renewal on a yearly basis for as long as the research remains active. Should the protocol not be renewed before expiration, all activities must cease until the protocol has been re-reviewed.

If approval did not accompany a proposal when it was submitted to a sponsor, it is the PI's responsibility to provide the sponsor with the approval notice.

This approval is issued under Colorado State University's Federal Wide Assurance 00000647 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under CSU's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

Janell Barker, Senior IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1655 Janell.Barker@Colostate.edu
Evelyn Swiss, IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1381 Evelyn.Swiss@Colostate.edu

Barker, Janell

Barker, Janell

Includes:

Approval is to recruit up to 37 parents who participated in the LSV training (2009-2011), and up to 25 parents who served as president of their school's PTO (2009-2011) with the approved recruitment and consent material. SURVEYS: Because of the nature of this research, it will not be necessary to obtain a signed consent form. However, all subjects must be consented with the approved electronic cover letter. The requirement of documentation of a consent form is waived under § ___.117(c)(2). INTERVIEWS: The above-referenced project was approved by the Institutional Review Board with the condition that the approved consent form is signed by the subjects and each subject is given a copy of the form. NO changes may be made to this document without first obtaining the approval of the IRB.

Approval Period: February 08, 2012 through February 07, 2013
Review Type: EXPEDITED
IRB Number: 00000202

APPENDIX H: LSV SCHEDULE

Month	Meeting Topics/Speakers and Guests
August #1	Meet and Greet/Social and Training Introduction
August #2	<p>Superintendent Welcome, Overview of Goals, and Public Participation</p> <p>Speakers and guests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent, SVVSD • Executive Director, Organizational Development and Communications, SVVSD • CSU Liaison, Center for Public Deliberation
September	<p>District Overview: Structure, Demographics, Goals, and Challenges</p> <p>Speakers and guests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent, SVVSD • Executive Director, Organizational Development and Communications, SVVSD • Director of Planning, SVVSD • Area assistant superintendents, SVVSD
October	<p>Governance: District and State Elected Officials</p> <p>Speakers and guests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent, SVVSD • Executive Director, Organizational Development and Communications, SVVSD • President of the Board of Education, SVVSD • Area Director, State Board of Education • State legislators
November	<p>School Finance: District and State Level</p> <p>Speakers and guests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent, SVVSD • Executive Director, Organizational Development and Communications, SVVSD • Chief Financial Officer, SVVSD • Chief Economist, State of Colorado

Month	Meeting Topics/Speakers and Guests
December	<p>Holiday Social: Informal Relationship Building Speakers and guests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent, SVVSD • President of the Board of Education, SVVSD • Executive Director, Organizational Development and Communications, SVVSD
January	<p>District Departments: Mission and Leaders Speakers and guests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent, SVVSD • Executive Director, Organizational Development and Communications, SVVSD • Chief Operations Officer, SVVSD
February	<p>Schools: Curriculum, Programs, Class Size, and Accountability Speakers and guests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent, SVVSD • Executive Director, Organizational Development and Communications, SVVSD • Assistant Superintendent of Learning and Achievement, SVVSD • Executive Director of Assessment and Curriculum, SVVSD • Chief Information Officer, SVVSD
March	<p>Services: Student Services, Special Education, Co-curricular Speakers and guests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent, SVVSD • Executive Director, Organizational Development and Communications, SVVSD • Executive Director of Special Education, SVVSD • Director of Co-curricular Activities, Athletics, and Arts, SVVSD • Director of Gifted and Talented Programming, SVVSD
April	<p>Wrap up: Public Participation and Certificate Presentation Speakers and guests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent, SVVSD • Executive Director, Organizational Development and Communications, SVVSD • CSU Liaison, Center for Public Deliberation

APPENDIX I: LIST OF ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS

PTO Level

1. Trail Ridge Middle School PTO Minutes dated September 30, 2010
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uy1qfzdCu6PaB8JygNahWgKvOVhY8OSGI DurAoQLRQM/edit>
2. Fall River Elementary School Communications Council Meeting Minutes dated September 13, 2010
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11P-zHfyV9Vnu9K-OugBYc5q3JMT6jlugCceXJE9VqE0/edit>
3. Trail Ridge Middle School PTO Meeting Minutes dated October 4, 2010.
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-_171qjXrn7pUYngVSNdyIWEYFtbMSUvze9Mp752JnA/edit
4. Niwot Elementary School Parent Teacher Action Committee (PTAC) May 2010 Meeting Minutes. <https://sites.google.com/site/niwotelementaryptac/minutes/may-2010/may-2010>

School District Level

1. Video tape of board meeting of the St. Vrain Valley School District dated February 15, 2012.
<http://www.stvrain.k12.co.us/boardOfEducation/meetingsMinutes/2012/02/15/#video>

Legislative Level

1. Copy of videotape posted May 17, 2011, and depicting LSV participant Laura McDonald. <http://blog.greateducation.org/page/3/>
2. Letter by Lisa Wiel, policy director for Great Education Colorado, dated November 2, 2011.
<http://www.greateducation.org/2011/11/lots-celebrate-lots/>
3. Quotation by former LSV participant Laura McDonald in news article “Boulder’s Rollie Heath Launches Effort to Raise Taxes for Schools Fund State Education.” (Moreno, Ivan. Daily Camera, May, 16, 2011).
http://www.dailycamera.com/ci_18073046?source=rss

Community Level

1. “Economist tells SVVSD, Parents Slow Growth Ahead” (Camron, V., Longmont Times-Call, Jan. 22, 2011):
http://www.timescall.com/ci_18096604?IADID=Search-www.timescall.com-www.timescall.com
2. “SVVSD Parent Group Seeks Members” (Camron, V., Longmont Times-Call, June 11, 2011).
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