RMP FAMILIES-AT-LARGE!

an overview of parent advocacy at Rocky Mountain Prep • 10.6.2014

THE THEORY

- We cannot achieve our mission of educational equity without parents as partners
- There is a great opportunity for parents to be a crucial lever in affecting education reform

WHAT WE KNOW

- All parents want their children to be successful
- Many parents, especially low-income and minority parents, lack access to high-quality schools and make school choices based on factors other than quality
- Parent engagement must be an integrated and systemic part of our school culture

THE PLAN

- Engage families on a three tier continuum: individual, school and community
- Communicate with families openly, honestly and frequently
- Equip parent leaders with the knowledge and tools to advocate
- Help create the political space for our parent voices' to demand excellent schools

TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

- Build strong 1:1 relationships between parents and teachers/other key staff members
- Identify "captains" at the classroom level who can support & inspire culture of engagement
- Invest parents in concrete advocacy opportunities and proactive leadership workshops

TRIUMPHS

- Last spring, we engaged 40% (125+) families in two community events to directly advocate for RMP's expansion to a second school to serve 225+ kids on our waitlist
- Three parents testified to the Denver school board and a full room of RMP parents, and many others who had to watch the proceedings from an overflow room
- Both current and waitlisted parents sent emails to Denver school board members to share their story and experience with public education and RMP

LESSONS LEARNED → QUESTIONS

- Our first big advocacy opportunity did not lead to a "win" - when that happens, how can we capture momentum and talk to families about next steps?
- Our advocacy opportunities for parents have been reactive and time did not allow for greater context or leadership development - how do we shift to proactive advocacy?