Who's Got the Power?

This activity is based on a tool called power mapping. Power mapping is a tool often used by grassroots community organizing groups to identify allies who may help them accomplish their goals. At CUP, we often use this activity with students to identify actual stakeholders to reinforce that our cities and communities are products of decision making.

Preparation: Draw the power map on a large piece of paper (see below for example). Write the issue at the top of the power map.

Step 1: Define "Power"

Start by asking: How do you define power? What does power look like? What does power look like in our community? Our city? Our country?

Have students share out, then share the following definition:

- *"Power" is the ability to make decisions that impact others. The greater the impact and the more people these decisions affect, the greater the power that person wields.*

Step 2: Who's involved?

Have students brainstorm and write down every stakeholder involved in the process. Use one sticky note per stakeholder. Encourage students to identify specific individuals and groups of people. (For example, instead of "the government," participants could write "the Mayor." Instead of "people," participants could write "renters" or "tenants.")

Stakeholders could be:
- Those responsible for creating the problem
- Those who have the power to fix the problem (whether or not they are doing so)
- Those who are geographically close to the issue
- Those who are working to fix the problem
- Include you and your group too!

Step 3: What's the impact?

Now have students place each stakeholder on the map, based on their level of power and how impacted they are by the issue. It's helpful to model this by taking one of the sticky notes and physically move the sticky note along the axis of power, and then along the axis of impact. Explain why you placed the sticky note where you did.

Have students place the sticky notes where they believe the stakeholders belong on the power map. Ask a few students to share out their reasoning for their placement.

Ask students to describe what a stakeholder's power looks like and how impacted they are. (If you have time, asking students to sketch out their responses can be really helpful!)

Step 4: Who's got the power?

Step back and ask participants to make observations and reflect:

- *Do you notice any patterns? Do you notice anything interesting and/ or surprising?*
- *Who has the most power? What kinds of people are these? What kind of groups do they belong to?*
- *Who is the most impacted? What kinds of people are these? What kind of groups do they belong to?*
- *Where are you located? Where are your friends and family located?*
- *What power do you have? What does your power look like? How can you activate your power?*
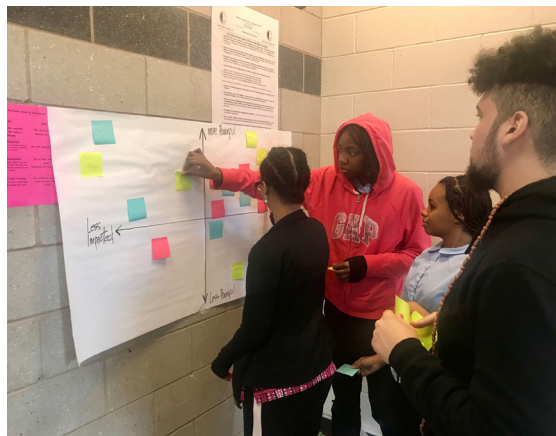
Example of students making a power map

Go Deeper: Re-do the activity, but this time change the horizontal axis to "Strongly Disagree" and "Strongly Agree." This can help you figure out who has the most influence over the issue and who is most likely to work with you. For more, visit beautifulrising.org/tool/power-mapping

Who's Got the Power?

What's the issue? _____

More Power

Less impact ⟵————————⟶ More impact

Less Power