



What is Solid Foundation?

Solid Foundation improves student achievement through parent engagement. The program is grounded in effective, research-based, proven strategies. A study of schools implementing Solid Foundation program for building a school community, published by the Harvard Family Research Project, found that the gain on state assessment tests demonstrated by these schools over a two year period was nearly double that of a control group of schools with identical beginning scores. The two year process of service and support, provided through the PIRC (Parent Information and Resource Center), is tailored to the resources and needs of each school.

What is the Community of the School?

A strong successful school is one that takes seriously the relationships among people. The connections among people---how they relate to one another---are one of the school's greatest assets. Social capital, the value found in trusting relationships, contributes to a student's opportunities for success.

A school functions as a community when those intimately attached to it---students, teachers, parents, personnel, volunteers---are in close association with one another, communicate with one another, and work together toward the common end of each child's academic and personal development.

Ask any teacher. Ask a parent. Ask a student. What do you like best about your school? The answer is most likely to be "the people". Not the textbooks. Not the desks. Not the computers. Simply, the people. A school community's strength lies in the relationships among its constituents.

How can Solid Foundation help our school community and involve parents?

Parents are a child's first and most influential teacher. Ask any teacher what accounts for students' success in school, apart from the quality of instruction, and they will invariably say that parents matter most. They are right. Research also tells us that the relationships between parents and children, the encouragement and discipline students receive at home, powerfully affect school learning.

Solid Foundation can help a school community increase the ways that parents are involved as well as the level of parental involvement. Strategies suggested through this process encourage meaningful communication between home and school; engage parents to take an active role in their children's learning and participate in their children's education at school. Parents and teachers sit side-by-side, as full partners in decision-making, to assist in the education of the school community's children.

In **Solid Foundation** schools, the connection between parents and their children's learning is not left to chance. A child's success takes root at home and blooms at school.

What is a Solid Foundation "School Team"?

Building a solid foundation of parental involvement takes commitment. An External Partner with the Solid Foundation program offered by the PIRC works with a team that will guide improvements.

The **School Team** includes the principal, teacher representatives, and parent representatives. It may include students at a high school level and community organization representatives. The team may be an existing committee, such as a school improvement team or a local school council, or a team that assembles specifically for the purposes of this project. Equal representation of the school's teachers and parents is required.

What is the primary purpose of this school team?

The School Team takes a serious look at what is really happening---at home and at school. School Team members give "voice" to all stakeholders. In the first year, the Team oversees a complete needs assessment process and develops an action plan. Sub-committees may be formed (engaging other stakeholders) at this time, to work on different aspects of the plan. The School Team works cooperatively with other groups in the school (if active) toward the same goal of improved student achievement.

How does Solid Foundation ensure success and support continuous improvement?

In the second year of the process, the action plan is implemented. Activities at school provide opportunities for effective parent involvement with student learning, and enhanced parent-school communication. Refreshed school policies that work to engage and involve parents with the school staff to ensure the success of students in school and beyond are introduced. Parent contribution to student learning through activities at home and in the community are acknowledged. Connections with community based organizations and businesses also focused on student achievement and family support are made. Training and consultation services strengthen the team's efforts to achieve goals. A solid foundation has been laid----and a school community is united toward their site-specific goals for success.

In the third year, the cycle begins again. A new needs assessment process allows the team to review what has been accomplished to improve student achievement through increased parent engagement. It is a time to recognize and celebrate the good things that have been accomplished while activating a new and continuous plan for improvement. The solid foundation of student achievement through effective parent involvement utilizing a team approach is secure. The team will continue to monitor its progress and refine its goals to reach high levels of success.