



Families & Schools

The Newsletter of the Academic Development Institute

Spring 2008

Three Paths to Parental Engagement

Published by the Harvard Family Research Project, a study of 129 schools implementing ADI's Solid Foundation program for building a school community 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. [click to download study: [The Effects of Comprehensive Parent Engagement on Student Learning Outcomes \(PDF\)](#)]

Now, ADI has made this research-proven comprehensive parent engagement model available online. Great for any school wanting to strengthen their parental involvement as part of their School Improvement Plan (SIP), Solid Foundation's web-based process guides a school team, with the assistance of an External Partner, through 10 efficient and effective steps to:

- assess current strengths and challenges
- develop a 2-year plan
- implement the plan with abundant resources

Solid Foundation is evidence-based and designed to:

- strengthen family-school connections,
- engage parents in children's learning, and
- improve student academic and social learning.

The process is directed by the principal and a school team (school improvement team or other school-based team that includes the principal, teacher representatives, parent representatives, and parent facilitator). An External Partner (personnel from a Partner Organization) assists the school team in the process. The Partner Organization may be the school district, a Parent Information Resource Center, State Education Agency, or other organization. External Partners are trained via webinar and conference call and certified in the process.

The Partner Organization submits the online forms to enroll, including enrollment of the External Partners to be trained and schools to be served. The Partner Organization receives a User ID and Password, as well as a User ID and Password for each school.

A school can choose one of 3 paths, depending on the level of support desired.

Path 1 allows a school-based team to walk through the online steps together to conduct a self-assessment, develop a plan, and implement specific strategies to address your school's purpose and plan. **There is no cost to the school for Path 1;** the external partner pays for training once, then may work with unlimited schools.

Path 2 includes all the steps in Path 1, with the addition of using a School Community Index. The school team can survey parents and teachers (and students in high schools) and receive a comprehensive report (the School

Community Index) to further aid them in developing a plan and implementing strategies for improvement in the area of parental engagement.

Path 3 utilizes Solid Foundation's comprehensive model over a 3-year period. This fully researched and practice-tested model helps a school carry out a first-class parental involvement program. The School Community Council, comprised of the principal, teachers, and parents, is responsible for implementing the model, meeting twice each month and following the field-tested, well-structured agendas in the SCC Planning Guide. Solid Foundation's computerized data and documentation system provides careful tracking of progress and generates progress reports useful in school improvement plans and proposals for funding.



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Solid Foundation Around the Nation

For more information on Solid Foundation, or for a brochure outlining costs associated with Paths 1, 2, or 3, see <http://www.adi.org/solidfoundation/> or e-mail SolidFoundation@adi.org.

Pennsylvania



Greater Johnstown Middle School: Christine Zepka, Teacher; Michele Ritenour, Staff; Darren Buchko, GJMS Principal; Michael Dadey (standing), Teacher; Crystal Hasselbauer, Parent; John Jubas (standing), District Liaison; Brian Hasselbauer, Parent; Amy Arcurio, Visiting Teacher from East Side Elementary School

The Pennsylvania Parent Information Resource Center (PA PIRC) supports schools in welcoming parents/family members and community representatives as active and effective partners in promoting student academic achievement. This work is conducted in multiple ways. One strategy to help achieve this goal is the utilization of Solid Foundation. Karen Shanoski of the PA PIRC said that Solid Foundation offers one-on-one contact with individual schools, bringing the parents and school staff together to increase parent involvement with the ul-

timate goal of improving student achievement. This is a great complement to the other work of the PA PIRC, which includes broader, state-wide efforts around parent involvement policy, and includes utilizing Parents as Teachers as a school readiness family involvement model and workshops about NCLB delivered by local parents and community-based organization staff.

In Pennsylvania, 3 Education Specialists work with 100 schools in 3 cohorts to implement Solid Foundation's Path 2. The 3-year process of service and support, provided free to schools in Pennsylvania through the PA PIRC, is tailored to the resources and needs of each school, and may be part of a school's improvement process.

While this is a building-based effort, several school districts have selected more than one school within the district for participation. There are at least two districts that have enrolled all the buildings in the district. The PA PIRC Education Specialists' team developed an introductory packet which is shared in a face to face meeting with the principal, superintendent, and may include staff and parents. The importance of a team that is composed of equal numbers of staff and parents is stressed. At the orientation meeting all team members learn about the Solid Foundation approach and develop a plan to carry out the first major task: surveying parents and staff (and students in high schools) using the School Community Index.

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William Penn Elementary: Amy Schroeder, Parent; Weezie Walter, Parent; Barb Spiri, Teacher; Jeff DerVanik, Head Teacher; Laura Small, Principal; Rebecca Hasselman, Teacher

Weezie Walter: "It's great to see pride and confidence reflected in the SCI data. People are pleased with the school, though we know there are things to work on. Parent education is not something we have currently, but may be one of our Action Plan goals."

Laura Small: "We're delighted to have 2 parents working with us. Amy Schroeder is a new Kindergarten parent, and Weezie Walter is a veteran parent that brings a strong background of school experience."

About ADI

The Academic Development Institute (ADI) works with families, schools, and communities so that all children may become self-directed learners, avid readers, and responsible citizens, respecting themselves and those around them. ADI's vision is of an American landscape filled with distinct school communities reflecting the hopes and dreams of the people intimately attached to them. To learn more about the work of ADI, please visit our website: www.adi.org

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Pictured on pages 2-3 are Action Plan Meetings, held following a survey process assessing perceptions in nine categories (e.g., Roles of Parents and Teachers and Students; Studying and Homework; Character Development). The School Community Index details the results of those surveys in colorful charts that each School Team reviews. The team begins by recognizing a threshold that represents the ideal. The bar is set high. The team compares the actual results of their survey responses to the threshold, stimulating quality discussion. Revealed strengths are recognized and celebrated. Areas that need improvement are developed into objectives within a written Action Plan, detailing the tasks to accomplish, a target date, individual(s) responsible for each task, and a measurable outcome. This work is set up in a 3-year cycle for continuous improvement. School communities that engage in this process reap the rewards of stronger partnerships focused on common goals: enriched associations and higher academic achievement for students.

Karen Shanoski reports, "Solid Foundation is great for schools that want to more intentionally focus on engaging parents to positively impact student academic success."



Clairton Elementary: Maureen Dobson, Principal; Leslie LeDonne, Parent; Gaila Johnson, (Grand)parent; Terri Britton, Parent; Juanita Horne, Guidance Counselor; Kevin Manko, Teacher; Andrea Dague, Teacher

New Hampshire

The New Hampshire PIRC is currently using Solid Foundation Path 2 to help schools and parents connect for the benefit of their students in 8 schools around the state, with plans to add 5 new schools each year. Below is an article by Lloyd Jones that appeared October 22, 2007 in a local paper, *The Conway Daily Sun*, regarding the

Conway Elementary School in Conway, NH and their use of Studying at Home, a Solid Foundation parent education course. (Excerpts reprinted here courtesy of *The Conway Daily Sun* and Lloyd Jones).

Parents Stepping Up to Help Students Study at Home Lloyd Jones

CONWAY, NH — In an effort to better improve student study habits in the home, a group of parents went back to school for a day last week. A collection of nine Conway Elementary School parents gave up six hours of their time last Tuesday, spending it in the function room at the Conway Fire Department with facilitator Karen Gerdts, from the Parent Information Resource Center in Concord, learning various techniques to become more involved in children's lives and create a passion for learning. Next up for the nine parents will be for them to share their skills with additional parents during three planned workshops next month.

"It was excellent," Mandy McDonald, family liaison coordinator for Conway Elementary School, said. "There was such great energy among the group. Now, hopefully, we can recruit more and more parents to become involved in the program."

Parents volunteering their time and energy to the program were Gredel Shaw, Dr. Rich Laracy, Kelly Gutowski, Mark Hounsell, Jacque Esmay, Dawn Ferren, Chris Foisey and Brian Duchesne. The collection of parents were trained to be group leaders as part of a series on studying at home, which is designed to help parents build their children's study habits in the home.

According to the edugov.com website, "Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) help implement successful and effective parental involvement policies, programs, and activities that lead to improvements in student academic achievement and that strengthen partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and other school personnel in meeting the education needs of children."

"Karen was great with everyone," McDonald said and explained that partnering with [the] PIRC came about after Conway El. was tabbed by the N.H. Department of Education as a school in need of improvement. "She was thrilled to work with us and she's also working with the (K. A.) Brett School in Tamworth. PIRC is willing to

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work with us for three years and for us it was a no-brainer to partner with them.”

Last spring, Conway El. formed a family/school committee, which was a team of teachers, staff and a core group of parents. “We sent out surveys to every teacher and parent, 202 in all and we got an 87 percent return, which was incredible,” McDonald said. “We really wanted honest feedback and I think we got it.” One area that jumped out to the team was study habits at home, and that was an area Gerds helped to address last Tuesday.

McDonald said the studying at home course for busy parents is designed as a tool that “teaches effective, efficient ways to stay in touch with your children and guide their academic progress.”

It is for parents of children in grades 1-6 and is taught by parents in small groups. The groups meet once a week for three weeks. Babysitting is provided for small children. Certificates will be awarded for completing all three sessions. This is an opportunity to get together with other parents.

“I really hope this snowballs and gets bigger and bigger,” McDonald said.

Nebraska

The purpose of the Nebraska Parent Information and Resource Center (NE PIRC) is to help schools and parents to partner together to support children’s learning. Under the leadership of Director Dr. Lisa St. Clair, the NE PIRC is a unique partnership of public and private organizations, working across the state in four broad areas. One area is to establish School Based PIRCs in Title I school buildings throughout the state. Dr. St. Clair reports, “Initially, we had targeted building these PIRCs in 65 schools. We are approved to implement them in 72 schools by 2011. Currently, School Based PIRCs have been established in 14 school sites. Another 23 sites are being recruited now and will be provided training this spring.” Information on the NE PIRC’s other three strategic areas of focus and outreach can be found on their website (www.NebraskaPIRC.org).

School Based PIRCs have been implemented in both urban and rural locations, as well as on the Umonhon Nation tribal reservation. The School Based PIRCs utilize Path 3 of Solid Foundation. Members of the School Based PIRC Councils have responded very positively to the Solid Foundation Planning Guide. The agenda items have helped them have a systematic focus, while

still responding to local needs (reviewing school improvement letters, establishing PIRC Parent Resource Rooms). Each community, whether urban or rural, requires culturally relevant and responsive supports from PIRC staff. Services are designed to locally meet the needs of children and families and, ultimately, to help each student achieve academically. One example of this is the use of elders and tribal leaders to work with the School Based PIRC at Umonhon Nation and their council. Another example is how the PIRC in Walthill partnered with its local library to provide a place for families with young children to meet and carry out interactive literacy activities. The Nebraska PIRC will continue to recruit school partners in these and other communities further west as services are expanded across the state.



School Based PIRC activities, Arnold Elementary School, Lincoln

The above PIRCs are using Path 2 or 3. PIRCs currently using Path 1 include: Alabama, Montana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Iowa.

For more information on the Solid Foundation model and strategies, see www.adi.org/solidfoundation/

6th Annual Research Dinner

Tuesday, April 22, 2008, Hotel Monaco Chicago

Dr. Dorothy Rich
2008 Guest Speaker



increasing time spent on homework, and decreasing time spent watching TV. Learn more about Dr. Rich at <http://www.megaskillshsi.org/drRichBio.html>.

We look forward to seeing you in Chicago!

Scenes from the 2007 dinner:



2007 guest speaker,
Anne Henderson



Each year *The School Community Journal* hosts an outstanding leader in the field of family, school, and community partnerships to speak at a dinner in Chicago. It provides a nice chance for the Academic Development Institute staff to update you on our work and for our guests to network with old friends, make some new ones, and get an inspiring message from a first-rate speaker.

ADI is pleased to announce our guest speaker for the 6th Annual ADI Research Dinner will be Dr. Dorothy Rich, founder and president of the nonprofit Home and School Institute, based in Washington, DC. The event will be held Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at the Hotel Monaco Chicago. A cash bar will be available at 5:30 p.m., with our buffet dinner beginning at 6:30 p.m. and our speaker to follow. If you are interested in attending, please contact Lori Thomas at editor@adi.org or Denice Hildebrandt at 217-732-6462, ext. 10 for more information, and RSVP no later than 4/8/08!

Dorothy Rich is an author, lecturer, and pioneering leader in the field of parent involvement in education, focusing on helping families and educators team together to build achievement in school and beyond.

In honor of the 20th Anniversary of the original MegaSkills edition, Dr. Rich has launched five new Initiatives: MegaSkills Site Awards, MegaSkills Leader Corps, MegaSkills for Children's Health, MegaSkills for the Early Years, and a new book for educators, *More Than An Apple, What Teachers Really Need to Survive and Thrive in Today's Schools*.

Dr. Rich's work has received the A+ for Breaking the Mold Award from the U.S. Department of Education, as well as recognition from the MacArthur Foundation and other distinguished foundations. Dr. Rich's work has been researched, tested, and found to be effective in raising student achievement, decreasing discipline problems,

ADI Launches Online Tools

www.families-schools.org

ADI has launched the new www.Families-Schools.org to showcase parental involvement in education and provide an easy-to-use tool for parents and schools.

This site provides quick and easy access to online resources for anyone interested in parental involvement, at any level. “Resources for Parents” has links to online sites and documents on a number of topics, from general parental involvement to special education to academic, social, and emotional issues. It also includes links to Spanish versions of these resources whenever possible.

“Resources for Schools” contains a search engine that provides links for resources on a number of levels or areas of interest (for example, choose Middle School or ELL), or choose a topic like Professional Development or Communication, or search by keyword.

The “Parent Involvement SIP Tool” provides a link to the Solid Foundation online tool and pathways, as described on page 1 of this newsletter.

Or choose “*School Community Journal*” and gain free access to over 15 years of scholarly research articles, program reports, and essays on various subjects related to the school as a community, such as family-school relations,

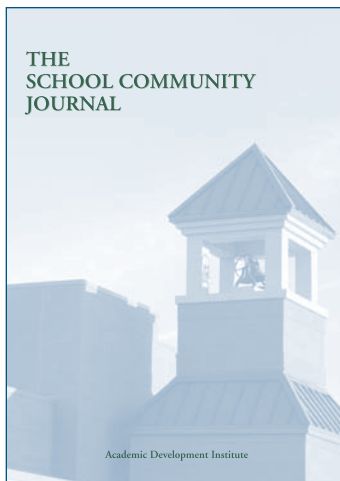
site-based management, homework, sociology of education, systems theory, and the classroom community. Book reviews are also included.



www.illinoisparents.org

For parents and schools in Illinois, they will find all the information available at www.families-schools.org, as described above, as well as some bonus features. The University of Illinois’ Early Childhood and Parenting (ECAP) Collaborative has developed additional Resources for Parents, just for Illinois. After clicking “Resources for Parents” at www.illinoisparents.org, you will find additional choices. These include the ability to search for resources by county, a tab just for hotline numbers, a list with links to statewide resources, a calendar of workshops, conferences, and other parenting-related events, and more.

A screenshot of the Families-Schools.org website. The header features a map of the United States and the text "Welcome to FAMILIES-SCHOOLS.ORG". Below the header is a navigation bar with four tabs: "Resources for Parents", "Resources for Schools", "Parent Involvement SIP Tool", and "School Community Journal". The main content area is titled "Parents Involved With..." and lists three numbered items: 1. "Their children's learning at home." with a photo of a woman and children; 2. "Parents of their children's schoolmates." with a photo of a group of people; 3. "Their children's teachers and school." with a photo of a man and a woman. To the right, there is a sidebar with the text "Sponsored by Center on Innovation & Improvement" and the URL "centeri.org". At the bottom of the sidebar, it says "PARENTS are an essential part of the solution to improved student learning."



Now Available: The School Community Journal Archive Search

Search for articles from the first issue in 1991 through the present, either by keyword, author's name, or issue at www.adi.org/journal

The School Community Journal is now an online-only, open access journal. We continue to provide the same high quality, peer-reviewed articles and book reviews, now available free via the worldwide web. An international advisory council establishes editorial policy; the editorial review board facilitates the blind peer review process utilized to select articles. The journal is listed with ERIC, Ebsco, and the online PsychInfo index of the APA.

Search the CII Database of Resources



<http://www.centerii.org/search/>

The Center on Innovation & Improvement helps regional centers work with states to provide districts, schools, and families with the opportunity, information, and skills to make wise decisions on behalf of students. CII is administered by the Academic Development Institute in collaboration with its partners, Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education and Little Planet Learning.

The Research, Reports, and Tools database (<http://www.centerii.org/search/>) contains links to online resources in the following areas and subcategories:

- Charter schools
- Private schools
- Public school choice
- Restructuring
- State system of support
- Supplemental educational services
 - o Evaluation of SES effectiveness
 - o Out-of-school time
 - o SES Promising practices
 - o SES tools for districts and schools
 - o SES tools for parents and community leaders
- o SES tools for states and providers
- o U.S. Dept. of Education guidance and report
- School and district improvement
 - o Assessment
 - o Curriculum
 - o Curriculum of the home (parents)
 - o Early childhood
 - o ELL
 - o Evaluation of charter school effectiveness
 - o Evaluation of improvement strategies
 - o High school improvement
 - o Improvement of planning and implementation
 - o Instruction
 - o Leadership Special education
 - o Organization websites
 - o Parent education
 - o Policy
 - o Professional development
 - o Purpose (vision, mission, roles)
 - o School-home communication
 - o Shared leadership
 - o Special education
 - o State systems of support
 - o The change process
 - o U.S. Dept. of Education guidance and report
 - o Using data and research

Metro-East Parent Connection (Illinois)

East St. Louis (IL) District #189 continues to partner with ADI's Metro-East Parent Connection to implement Solid Foundation. Solid Foundation has continued to evolve to fit the districts' needs since 2000. Staff from the Metro-East Parent Connection trains approximately 42 Lead Parents monthly in the areas of parent leadership, NCLB policy, and parent education. In all district schools, a teacher is identified as a Parent Education Facilitator and assists with implementation of the District's Parental Involvement Policy. The district's Parent Coordinator, Mr. Sherman Fowler, oversees implementation of individual school strategies to engage parents. Currently, the Lead Parents are working on recruiting, training, and retaining other parents.



District #189 Lead Parents and Parent Education Facilitators

Metro-East Parent Connection Staff are also involved in working with 2 elementary schools, Hawthorne and Mandela, two middle schools, Lincoln and Wyvetter Younge, and East St. Louis Senior High School in their 21st Century Community Learning Programs. Staff is providing monthly parent education training to the families in the program, covering a variety of topics including *Homework is Habit Forming*, *Character and Leadership*, and *Mentoring and Learning*. Home visits are also being implemented, during which students receive books and their families receive parent education information.

Alton (IL) School District is currently in the process of implementing Solid Foundation Path 1 throughout all 7 elementary schools and the (1) middle school (see page 1 for more information on Path 1). Alton has been engaged in offering Solid Foundation Academies to school-based teams consisting of the principal, teacher, and parents each semester for the past 4 years. Solid Foundation Academies offer 5 hours of training around a specific area, such as School-Home Communication. Alton has a

new Title I Director, Kristie Baumgartner, who has continued with the district's vision to build capacity to meet the needs of all students and their families. Also new this year are Assistant Superintendent Ken Spellings' monthly Parent Meetings. Alton continues to design and develop innovative ideas to meet the diverse needs of their students and families.

Harris Elementary School in Madison, IL continues to implement the Solid Foundation School Community Council (SCC). Harris teachers recently finished visiting the homes of all 3rd graders, and 2nd grade teachers will begin visiting in May. The SCC has been quite successful in reaching families by hosting a variety of parent activities including the Interactive Reading Workshop conducted by Joyce Smith of ADI. The Interactive Reading Workshop reviews powerful aspects of what parents can do with their children to enhance the curriculum of the home.



1st photo above: Alton School District Parent Workshop, Homework Is Habit Forming, led by parents trained in a Solid Foundation Academy

2nd photo above: District 189 Lead Parents and Parent Education Facilitators involved in an activity designed to build collaboration among team members as they revise the District Parental Involvement Policy