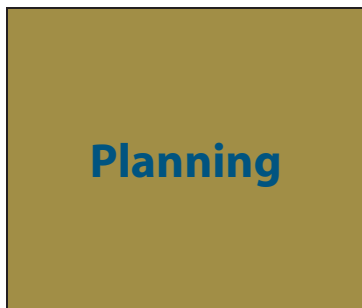
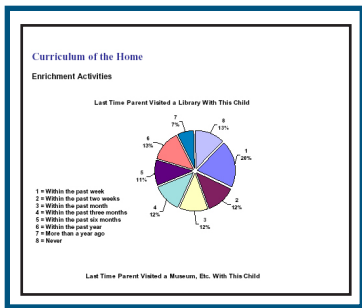
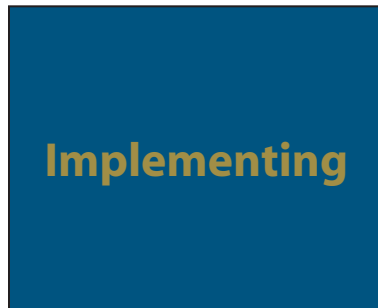
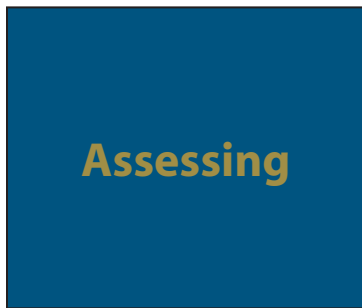


# Solid Foundation®

## Path 2: School Community Index

### BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION®

Strategies to fit your school's purpose and plan.



Parents are part of the solution for improved student learning.

## PARENTS AND LEARNING

Solid Foundation—a comprehensive parent engagement program developed by the Academic Development Institute (ADI)—was implemented and evaluated in 129 high-poverty schools in Illinois between 2001 and 2003. These schools showed gains on state assessments that nearly doubled those of a control group of schools with identical beginning scores. The results were shown in an independent evaluation, presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference, and have been published in journal articles and two books. These effective, research-based, proven strategies are now brought to other schools, the services tailored to the resources and needs of each school.

The Academic Development Institute was founded as a non-profit organization in Illinois in 1984 with the mission of assisting families, schools, and communities with children's academic and personal development. From 1997 to 2007, ADI served as the Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) for Illinois, supported by the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement, and is now a partner in the PIRCs in Pennsylvania, Nebraska, and New Hampshire.

**[www.families-schools.org](http://www.families-schools.org)**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **Introduction**

- Page 5      **What is Solid Foundation?**
- Page 7      **What are the 10 Efficient and Effective Steps?**

## **Assessing the School's Needs**

- Page 11      **Policy and Program Analysis**
- Page 12      **School Community Index**

## **Planning for Improvement**

- Page 19      **Action Planning**
- Page 20      **Implementing the Action Plan**

## **Getting Started**

- Page 23      **Making a Commitment**
- Page 24      **For More Information**

## **Sample Index Pages**

- Page 27      **Sample Pages from Index Report**





# Introduction

**Solid Foundation's goal** is to improve students' learning and school success by informing, equipping, and empowering parents to enhance their children's learning at home, support their children's learning at school, participate in improving their children's schools, and make decisions about their children's learning and schooling.

## WHAT IS SOLID FOUNDATION®?

Solid Foundation® is an evidence-based process designed to:

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

A school, working with an External Partner, adopts one of three Solid Foundation® paths.

### **Path 1 – Assess/Plan/Implement**

Path 1 is a web-based process that guides a school team through 10 efficient and effective steps to:

- assess the school community’s strengths and areas for improvement,
- develop a 2-year plan, and
- implement the plan with abundant resources.

### **Path 2 - School Community Index**

The School Community Index adds to Path 1 a powerful tool for a more thorough self-assessment by surveying parents, teachers (and students in high schools). A 90-page report, based on the surveys, gathers important information about parents’ involvement with the school and engagement with their children at home.

### **Path 3 - Comprehensive Model**

The Solid Foundation® model enables the school to put in place a first-class parental involvement program, with all the evidence-based components of a strong school community.

A School Community Council, comprised of the principal, teachers, and parents, is responsible for implementing model, meeting twice each month and following the field-tested, well-structured agendas in the SCC Planning Guide.

The Solid Foundation® computerized data and documentation system provides careful tracking of progress and generates progress reports useful in school improvement plans and proposals for funding.

## WHAT IS SOLID FOUNDATION®

### PATH 2 - SCHOOL COMMUNITY INDEX?

Solid Foundation's Path 2 is a web-based process that guides a school team through 10 efficient and effective steps to:

- **Assess the school community's strengths and areas for improvement**
- **Develop a two-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**
- **Improve student academic and social learning**

**School Team.** The Solid Foundation 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).

**External Partner.** An External Partner (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 to the school. External Partners are personnel from the Partner Organization who are trained and certified in the Solid Foundation process.

## WHAT ARE THE 10 EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE STEPS?

**Step 1: Hold Orientation Meeting.** The principal forms the school team and schedules a two-hour orientation meeting led by the External Partner. Solid Foundation requires a balance of parents and school staff members on the team (should not exceed 10 members). Parents may not be employees of the school and must be the parents of currently-enrolled students.


**Step 2: Complete School Information Form.** The principal completes an online School Information Form and prints copies for the school team.

**Step 3: Gather Key Documents.** The principal gathers copies of the following documents, if available, for the school team and External Partner:

- District parent involvement policy
- School parent involvement policy
- Compact
- Homework policy
- Student report card
- Classroom visit policy

**Step 4: Complete Policy Analysis.** The External Partner (with the school team when possible) scores the 6 key documents with Solid Foundation's key document rubrics. The results are entered into the school's exclusive database on the Solid Foundation website. The principal prints copies of the completed rubrics for the school team.

**Step 5: Complete School Community Surveys.** The School Community Index is a powerful tool for a thorough self-assessment based on surveys administered to parents and teachers (and students in high schools). Scantron surveys are obtained from ADI and mailed to the school. The External Partner suggests strategies for administering the surveys for a maximum return.



**Step 6: Download Resource Manual.** The school receives a copy of the Resource Manual. The principal makes copies of the Resource Manual for the school team from the web or from the CD provided with the manual. The Solid Foundation Resource Manual is full of research-based strategies, trainings, curriculum, forms, and tools that assist the school team in implementing its action plan.

**Step 7: Complete Needs Assessment.** The school team meets to review the Threshold Analysis (one section of the School Community Index) which includes information derived from the School Information Form, Policy Analysis, and survey results.

**Step 8: Create Action Plan.** The school team develops a two-year plan based on the needs assessment and selected sections of the Resource Manual. The principal enters the action plan into the web-based school database.

**Step 9: Implement Action Plan.** The principal leads the school team and other staff and volunteers in implementing the action plan. The External Partner provides guidance and support.

**Step 10: Monitor and Evaluate.** The school team monitors progress with implementation and updates the action plan; the External Partner reviews and offers suggestions. At the end of the two-year implementation period, the school team retraces the steps outlined here to produce both a documented account of progress and a plan for the next two years.

**Evaluation:** The school and External Partner can efficiently evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the Solid Foundation process by:

- Implementation:** Using the monitoring feature built into the action plan to track successful implementation of each objective set by the school team.
- Effectiveness:** Using the beginning and ending Policy Analysis and survey results as a pre- and post-analysis of progress.



# Assessing the School's Needs



## WHAT IS POLICY AND PROGRAM ANALYSIS?

An External Partner, with the school team, reviews the district and school parent involvement policies and programs and makes initial recommendations based on rubrics of effective policy and practice. A sample is included in the Appendix of the rubric for School Parent Involvement Policy Evaluation.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2002 (NCLB) defines parental involvement as “the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring—

- parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning
- parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school
- parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and
- other activities are carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA (Parental Involvement).”

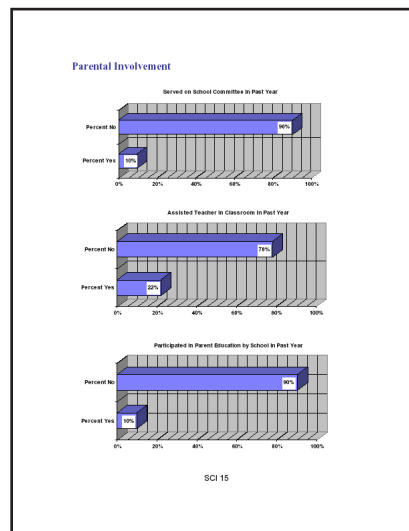
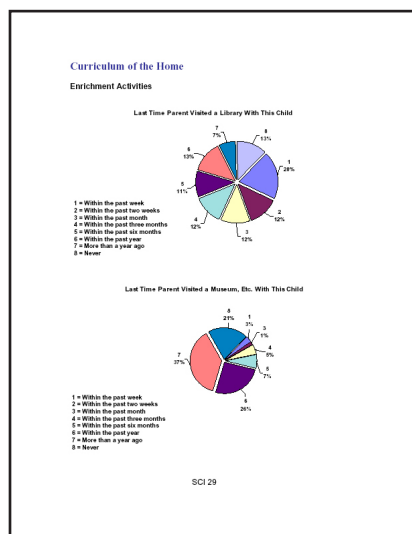
Solid Foundation provides an efficient pathway for districts and schools to help parents become full partners in their children’s learning.

# WHAT IS A

# SCHOOL COMMUNITY INDEX?

The School Community Index (SCI) is a 90-page report with charts and graphs. The SCI provides information compiled from surveys administered to parents and teachers (and students in high schools), a school information form, and analysis of key documents. The Index is organized in the following parts:

1. About Your School
2. Policy Analysis
3. Who Completed the Survey?
4. Parental Involvement
5. The Curriculum of the Home
6. Perceptions of Parents and Teachers (and Students in High Schools)
7. Summary: School Community Index
8. Threshold Analysis/Needs Assessment
9. Action Plan



## WHY USE A

## SCHOOL COMMUNITY INDEX?

At one time or another, most schools ask themselves the questions: 1) How are we doing with parents? 2) What can we learn about our school by asking the people who know it best—teachers and parents, and in high schools the students themselves?

The School Community Index is a descriptive tool—describing the school community as seen through the eyes of its constituents, with additional information provided by the principal. The School Community Index is not designed to provide comparisons with other schools, but to help the school that uses it learn more about itself.

The parent surveys are available in both English and Spanish.

*Our School Community Council used the School Community Index to set goals for the year. The discussion around the data was very productive and we used the information in many ways throughout our reform process. We're looking forward to getting the results of our next report and hope to see gains as we track our progress at Foster.*

– Judy Baseman, Principal, Stephen Foster Elementary School

## HOW DOES A SCHOOL ADMINISTER SCI SURVEYS?

The School Community Index is a powerful tool for a thorough self-assessment based on surveys administered to parents and teachers (and students in high schools). Scantron surveys are mailed to the school by ADI. The External Partner suggests strategies for administering the surveys for a maximum return. For elementary schools, a minimum return of 90% of the teachers and 40% of the parents is required to complete a report. In high schools, a return of 90% of the teachers, 25% of the parents, and 90% of the students is required to complete a report. The school is responsible for shipping surveys back to ADI using UPS, FedEx, or a similar carrier that can track the package. It takes 4 weeks for ADI to process the surveys, analyze the data, and develop the report. Twelve copies of the School Community Index report are sent to the External Partner for delivery to the school. The External Partner sends a copy to the principal for review prior to the meeting with the school team.

## WHAT IS THE

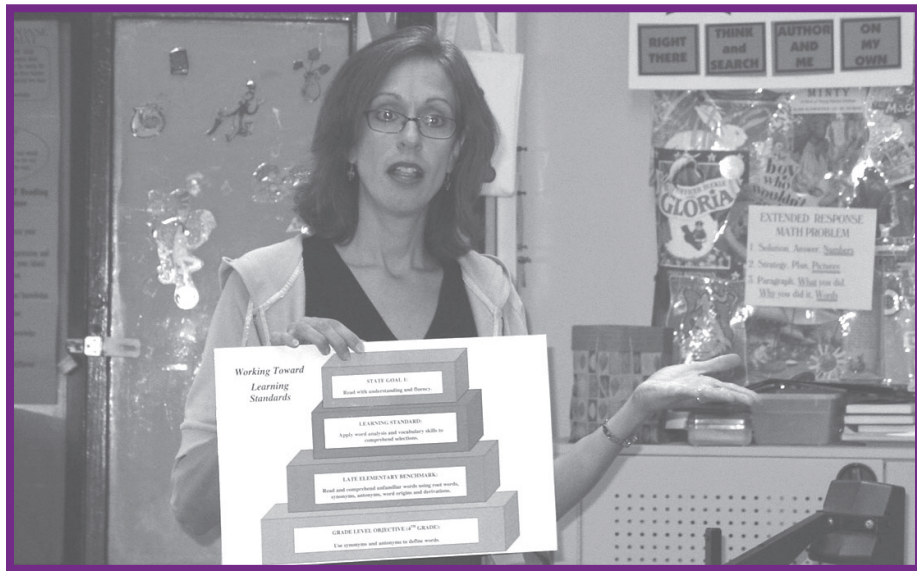
## THRESHOLD ANALYSIS?

The Threshold Analysis, included in the SCI report, helps a school improvement team sort through the data in the report, draw conclusions, set priorities, and develop an action plan. The Threshold Analysis is a valuable tool in continuous school improvement.

With the Threshold Analysis and needs assessment, the school team identifies areas of strength and makes plans to publicize and celebrate these accomplishments. The team also focuses on areas that need improvement and develops action steps for inclusion in the school improvement plan.

*The School Community Index contained important information regarding the school community that was used to identify areas of weakness, strength, success, concern, goals, and objectives. The index helped us identify how parents can make an academic and social difference in their child's life at home and school. I would recommend this tool to anyone who is interested in improving their school community. Expect real results.*

– Tony Brooks, Principal, Centerville Elementary School





# Planning for Improvement





## ACTION PLANNING

When the School Community Index report has been completed, the External Partner meets with the school team to review the results and develop an action plan.

The planning session typically takes about 2 hours. The Index's Threshold Analysis/Needs Assessment provides a structure to interpret the results of the surveys and list strengths and areas that could use some attention. The action plan includes ways to celebrate the successes and practical ways to address the areas that need attention.

The action plan outlines specific tasks, persons responsible, and a timeline. Over the next two years, the school implements its action plan.

The External Partner returns to the school to provide training and technical assistance, to meet with the team, and assess progress.

Two years after the initial action plan is developed, the External Partner assists the school in administering the School Community Surveys, and ADI prepares a School Community Index report. This report serves as a measure of progress with the implementation of the action plan and a catalyst for a new action plan.

## IMPLEMENTING THE ACTION PLAN

Some of the activities included in the school's action plan are invariably similar to activities successfully implemented by other schools. For these activities, ADI provides materials to help. The materials are full of ideas and include training manuals, forms, and other tools that facilitate the school's plan.

Examples of materials provided to school teams to assist with their action plans include:

- Rubrics to improve compacts, homework policies
- Ideas for making school a “welcoming place”
- Ideas for acquainting parents with learning standards
- Planning tools for open houses and parent-student-teacher conferences
- Home Visiting training materials
- Interactive Reading Workshops for parents
- Home Gathering training materials
- Parent Education materials:

Ready, Here I Come!

Reading at Home

Studying at Home

Raising Good Kids

The materials are provided on the Solid Foundation website so the school can make copies and use the materials as needed.



# Getting Started





## MAKING A COMMITMENT

---

**Assessing Need and Planning Action.** Building a solid foundation of parental involvement takes a commitment. The first commitment is to take a serious look at what is already happening—at home and at school. The School Community Index is based on surveys of parents and teachers (and students in high schools) as well as information provided by the principal. The School Community Index is a complete needs assessment with an accompanying guide for a school team to develop an action plan. A resource manual is provided to help implement the action plan.

**Partner Organization.** Each school works with an External Partner to implement the Solid Foundation program. The External Partner is on the staff of a Partner Organization and has been trained in Solid Foundation®. The Partner Organization may be the school district, a Parent Information Resource Center, State Education Agency, or other organization external to the school.

**Consultation.** The External Partner meets with the school team before administering the surveys and again to review the results and develop an action plan. The school may also elect to bring the External Partner back for additional consultations to monitor progress.

**Training.** Another option is for the External Partner to return to the school to provide training in specific areas of importance to the school's action plan.

**Team Effort.** The school improvement team or a similar group with both teacher and parent representatives is ideal for reviewing the needs assessment and developing an action plan. The results are shared and discussed with the entire faculty and staff and with the parent organization. Other groups are enlisted in carrying out the action plan.

**Committing Time and Resources.** Assessing needs and planning actions is productive only if the school commits time and resources to carry out the action plan. Before agreeing to this process, the school should devote funds to the school team as a budget for its action plan. These funds would be used to carry out the activities of the action plan.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT  
SOLID FOUNDATION®

Contact:

**Reatha Owen**  
Director of Solid Foundation  
Academic Development Institute  
121 N. Kickapoo Street  
Lincoln, IL 62656

217-732-6462, ext. 17

[rowen@adi.org](mailto:rowen@adi.org)

[www.families-schools.org](http://www.families-schools.org)

For districts and schools interested in a comprehensive parent engagement model that is research-based and field-tested, ADI also offers Solid Foundation Path 3 with intensive, two-year implementation led by a site-based School Community Council.



# Appendix



## SAMPLE PAGES FROM INDEX

### REPORTS

The School Community Index Report is a 90-page (more for high schools) document that provides an analysis of the results of the school community surveys, policy review, and school information. The report includes charts and graphs. The sections of the report are:

1. About Your School
2. Policy Analysis
3. Who Completed the Survey?
4. Parental Involvement
5. The Curriculum of the Home
6. Perceptions of Parents and Teachers (and Students in High Schools)
7. Summary: School Community Index
8. Threshold Analysis/Needs Assessment
9. Action Plan

Sample pages from some of the sections are included on the following pages.



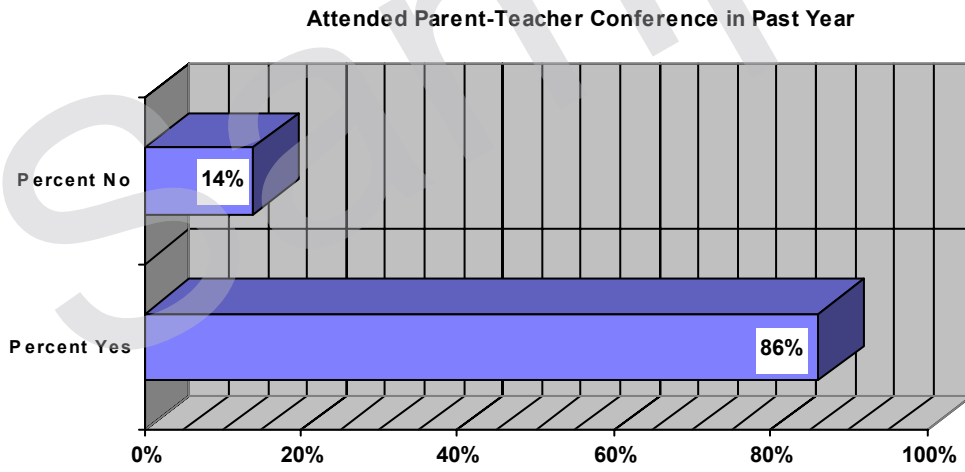
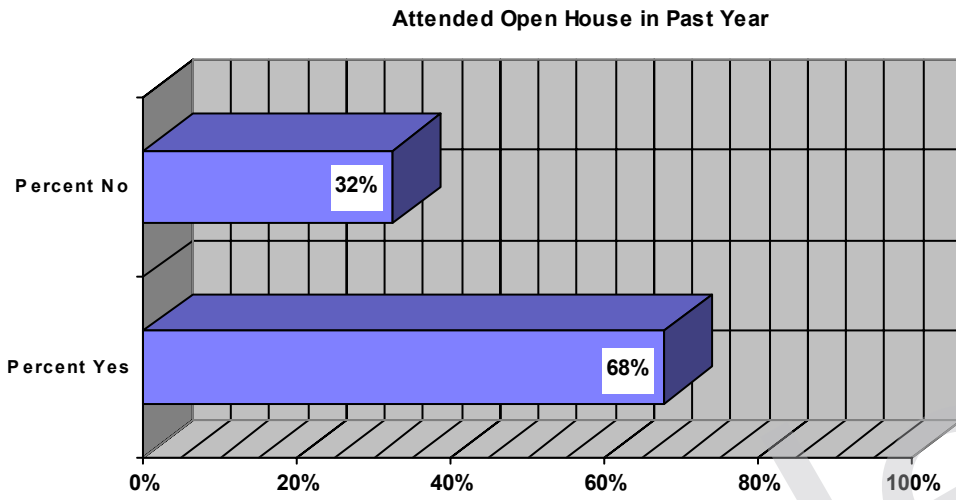
# Policy Analysis

## School Parent Involvement Policy Evaluation

Required Activities (NCLB)	Score	Criteria for Scoring "2" assumes that criterion for "1" is met. The written policy...
1. Conducts an annual meeting with parents to discuss program plans, implementation, and suggestions at a convenient time for parents.	1	1 = States that the school conducts an annual meeting with parents to discuss program plans, implementation, and suggestions at a convenient time for parents. 2 = Requires agendas and minutes for meeting, maintained and reported from year to year.
2. Provides parents information in a timely manner about programs that includes a description and explanation of the school's curriculum, the forms of academic assessments used to measure children's progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet.	2	1 = States that information about the school's programs, curriculum, assessments, and expected proficiency levels is provided in a timely manner. 2 = Includes timeline for providing information about the school's programs, curriculum, assessments, and expected proficiency levels and specifies how it is provided.
3. School asks parents to participate, as appropriate, in decisions about the education of their children.	2	1 = States that parents are included in decisions about their children. 2 = Specifies the situations in which parents are included in decisions about the education of their children.
4. Provides each parent an individual student report about the performance of their child on State assessments in at least math, language arts, and reading.	2	1 = States that parents are provided individual student reports of performance on State assessments. 2 = Specifies how parents are provided an opportunity to discuss the reports with a teacher or other school personnel.
5. Provides each parent timely notice when their child has been assigned or has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who is not highly qualified within the meaning of the term in section 200.56 of the Title I Final Regulations.	1	1 = States that parents receive timely notice when their child has been assigned or has been taught by a teacher who is not highly qualified. 2 = Specifies how parents are notified when their child has a teacher who is not highly qualified and includes a procedure for parents to seek further information from the school, including options available to them.
6. Provides assistance to parents in understanding the following topics:		
a. the state's academic content standards	0	1 = States that parents are provided assistance in understanding the state's academic content standards. 2 = Describes how parents are provided assistance and who (by position title) is responsible for providing it.
b. the state's student academic achievement standards	1	1 = States that parents are provided assistance in understanding the state's student academic achievement standards. 2 = Describes how parents are provided assistance and who (by position title) is responsible for providing it.
c. the state and local academic assessments including alternate assessments	1	1 = States that parents are provided assistance in understanding the state and local academic assessments including alternate assessments. 2 = Describes how parents are provided assistance and who (by position title) is responsible for providing it.
d. how to monitor their child's progress	2	1 = States that parents are provided assistance in monitoring their child's progress. 2 = Describes how parents are provided assistance and who (by position title) is responsible for providing it.

Score Guide: 0 = no evidence of criterion being met, 1 = evidence that criterion 1 is met, 2 = evidence that criteria 1 and 2 are met

# Parental Involvement

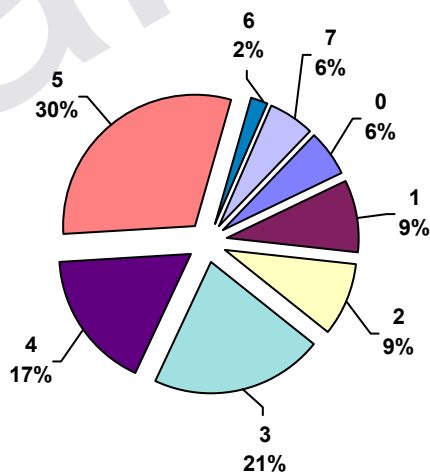


# Curriculum of the Home: Studying

## Days Spent with Homework and Studying at Home in Past Week

Year in School	No Days	1 Day	2 Days	3 Days	4 Days	5 Days	6 Days	7 Days
00 Kindergarten		26%	17%	35%	9%	13%		
01 First Grade	8%			17%	25%	38%	4%	8%
02 Second Grade	10%	5%	19%	19%	38%	5%	5%	
03 Third Grade	5%	5%	16%	21%	5%	37%	5%	5%
04 Fourth Grade	5%	10%	15%	15%	25%	30%		
05 Fifth Grade			6%	11%	22%	44%	6%	11%
06 Sixth Grade	27%	7%	7%	27%	7%	27%		
07 Seventh Grade	18%			18%	9%	27%		27%
08 Eighth Grade	7%	13%	20%	20%	27%	13%		

**Days Studied at Home in Past Week, All Students**



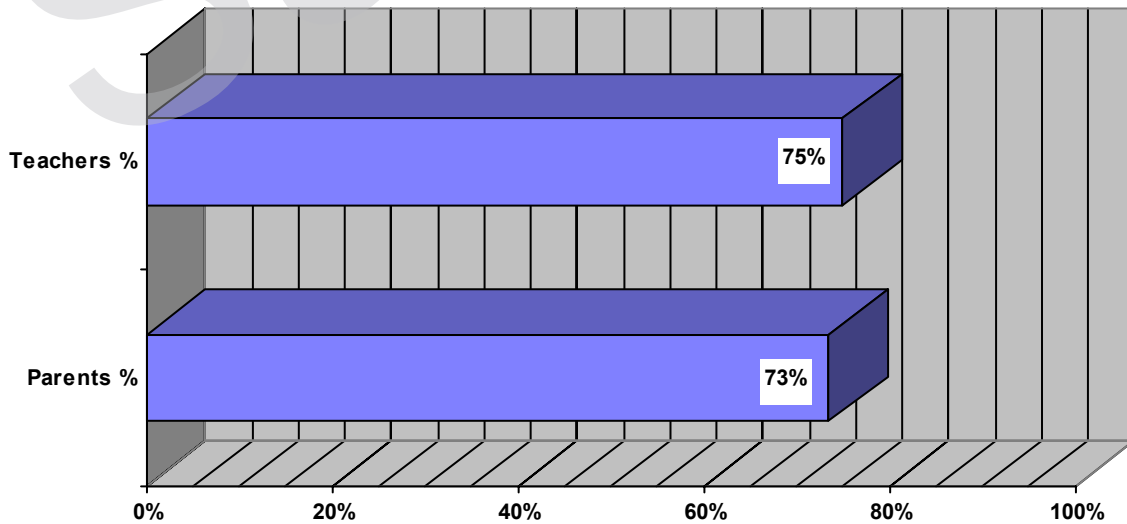
# Reading

**Percent Agree / Strongly Agree**

	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Teachers</b>
27. Teachers encourage students to read for pleasure.	<b>83%</b>	<b>100%</b>
28. Parents encourage their children to read for pleasure.	<b>72%</b>	<b>11%</b>
29. Teachers teach students how to read to master material.	<b>75%</b>	<b>83%</b>
30. The school library or learning center is a place children like to spend time.	<b>66%</b>	<b>84%</b>
31. The school library or learning center is well-stocked with books for students.	<b>68%</b>	<b>78%</b>
32. The importance of reading is stressed.	<b>75%</b>	<b>95%</b>

**Percent Agree or Strongly Agree Responses / All Questions Combined**

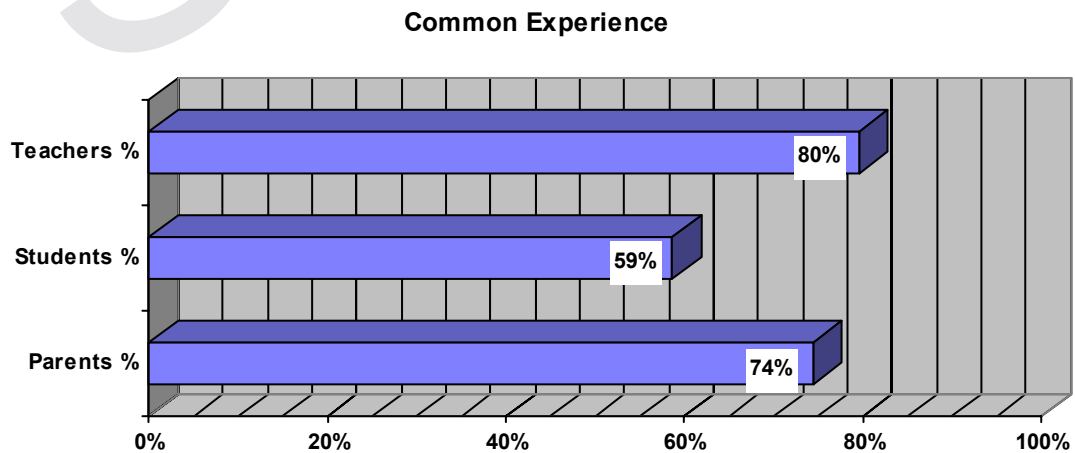
**Reading**



## Common Experience/School Climate

	<u>Percent Agree / Strongly Agree</u>		
	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Parents</b>
48. Parents feel welcome when they visit the school.	78%	51%	72%
49. The office staff greets visitors warmly.	75%	47%	66%
50. Administrators at the school are helpful.	95%	60%	72%
51. The support staff at the school -- custodians, clerks, cafeteria staff -- seem to care about the students.	75%	64%	69%
52. The school building is kept clean.	100%	72%	91%
53. The school building is in good repair and is well-maintained.	95%	73%	86%
54. Teachers seem to enjoy teaching at the school.	75%	55%	64%
55. The school is safe and orderly.	100%	75%	82%
56. Students are proud to be at this school.	45%	42%	69%
57. Parents are happy their children are enrolled at this school.	58%	46%	74%

### Percent Agree or Strongly Agree Responses / All Questions Combined



School Community Index

Perceptions of Teachers, Students, and Parents

SCI 53