

# Who Are We?

## Assessing Your Family-School Community

### *How to Engage All Stakeholders to Enable Data-Driven Decisions*

#### What is a School Community Index?

The School Community Index is a 100-page report with charts and graphs providing information compiled from surveys administered to parents and teachers and a needs assessment completed by the principal. The high school version also includes a survey of students. The Index is organized into seven parts:

- (1) Who Completed the Survey?
- (2) Parental Involvement
- (3) The Curriculum of the Home
- (4) Perceptions of Parents and Teachers
- (5) Needs Assessment
- (6) Summary
- (7) Threshold Analysis

This concluding part enables the school to draw conclusions and establish an action plan that will strengthen the school community.

#### Why Use a School Community Index?

This analysis enables administration, faculty, other parent organizations, school board and other interested groups to understand the impressions of two important constituencies—parents and teachers—at a particular point in time. The School Community Index is not designed to provide comparisons with other schools. The School Community Index is a descriptive tool, describing the school community as seen through the eyes of parents, teachers, and the principal. The high school version also includes perceptions of students.

#### Identifying the Need for the School Community Index Tool – Data Driven Shared Decision Making

At one time or another, most schools come to the conclusion that they need to ask themselves the questions: How are we doing with parents? Do we have an assessment tool that will facilitate data driven shared decision making?

#### Procedure, Completion and Implementation--Procedure for the School Community Index

- (1) Identify need for the SCI – Meet with Administration and Stakeholders
- (2) School Information Form is completed and sent to ADI
- (3) Surveys are shipped from ADI to School: Parent and Teacher Surveys and Principal Assessments
- (4) A letter is sent to the Principal that gives suggestions for administering the surveys to parents and teachers:
- (5) A letter is sent to all teachers that gives suggestions for distribution and tips for collection of the parent surveys.
- (6) Appropriate surveys are filled out by all teachers, one parent from every family (one household), and the principal.
- (7) When the surveys are completed, the surveys are shipped back to ADI and entered into a data base. The data is disaggregated and compiled into a document called a School Community Index and Threshold Analysis.
- (8) Survey return expectations: Elementary and middle schools administer surveys to teachers and parents, and a 90% return for teachers and 40% return for parents is necessary to provide reliable results. High schools may survey teachers, parents, and students, again with a 90% return of teachers, 90% return of students, and 40% return of parents required. If achieving a 40% return from parents seems unlikely, the school may administer the surveys only to teachers and students.

#### How do schools get a good return on the surveys?

- ✓ Clearly state the purpose and the value of the School Community Index Report.
- ✓ Inform parents their “voice” is important and the surveys are completed anonymously.
- ✓ If you can think of a clever incentive to encourage the students to return the surveys from their parents, give it a try.
- ✓ Send home a Parent Survey with the youngest elementary/high school student in each family (one survey per family). If a student has a younger sibling in the elementary/high school, then that student would not need a survey for his or her parents.



- ✓ Surveys for parents are available in English and Spanish. You may know which survey would be most appropriate for a particular family, or you may ask the student which survey the student would suggest for the parents.
- ✓ It is best to send the surveys home on a Monday or Tuesday so that the parents have time to complete it before a weekend intervenes.
- ✓ The survey instructions ask for their return in two days. Remind the students each day to remind their parents to complete the surveys.
- ✓ Send home a reminder note to parents that have not returned the survey in two days. Some surveys will trickle in for several days.
- ✓ Provide a place in the classroom for completed surveys to be returned.
- ✓ A designated place needs to be identified for completed surveys (for example: turned into the principal's office).
- ✓ Thank the students for their help in returning the surveys!

"We did the SCI in fall. We had treats for those who returned it by a specific date!" – Mary Beth Bialicki, Foster Elementary School, Appleton, WI

### How to Use the School Community Index and Threshold Analysis

- (1) School personnel (teachers, parents and the principal) are identified to complete the Threshold Analysis.
- (2) Objectives and expected outcomes are identified based on the data and expected thresholds.
- (3) Objectives and expected outcomes can then be used by teams to plan for improvement or entered into the school improvement plan.
- (4) Monitoring and accountability systems can be put in place to track result.

How has the Index been used?

"Warren East Middle School faculty and staff reviewed the data in the School Community Index. We were able to identify our strengths and weaknesses concerning community relations. This tool was instrumental to addressing our priority needs and goals when we wrote the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. The index provides us with the data necessary to support our goals." – Nancy Wilson, WEMS

### Ways to Use the School Community Index and Threshold Analysis

#### **Data Driven Shared Decision-Making**

- (1) A school team can complete the entire Threshold Analysis and follow through with an Action Plan, reviewing areas of strength and areas that need

attention. (The Index automatically identifies 5 Areas of Strength and 5 Areas that Need Attention)

- (2) A school team can start with a specific content area only, such as *Perceptions of Parents and Teachers*, and identify objectives and expected outcomes:
  - Look at the Areas of Strength (Complete an analysis where parents and teachers agree, follow up with observations and objectives to build on strengths.)
  - Look at Areas that Need Attention (Complete an analysis where parents and teachers disagree, follow up with objectives and expected outcomes for improvement.)
- (3) A school team can look at other individual components (for example: *Who Completed the Survey?* or *Parent Involvement*) of the Index and identify areas of strength and areas that need attention.

"Our School Community Council used the SCI 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, Appleton, WI)

Use of the School Community Index and Threshold Analysis:

*"The SCI indicated that only 21% of parents said they volunteered. We sent out the volunteer needs survey and SCC members worked on a chart for teachers to identify parents as volunteers."*

*The survey results showed the PTO meetings had small attendance. We put the FFN, our PTO, back to back meetings with our SCC meeting.*

*Only 9% of parents said they participated in parent education. We used it to determine what class to offer our parents. We offered the Studying at Home class and the Interactive Reading class.*

*We used the threshold analysis to determine what our main focus should be for the SCC. Our areas that needed attention were:*

- *Teachers visiting homes of students. (We implemented Home Visits.)*
- *Students are taught how to study (We offered Studying at Home class.)*
- *Parents know most of the other parents in their child's class (We offered more family nights and open school days.)"*

– Mary Beth Bialecki – Coordinator, Stephen Foster Elementary School, Appleton, WI

### **Technical Assistance and Support**

School Community Index & Threshold Analysis Consultation includes:

- Use of the SCI
- Technical support (email and phone consultation) regarding the Threshold Analysis and Action Plan
- On site follow-up consultation after objectives, expected outcomes and action plans have been implemented
- Email, phone or on-site comparison of Year 1 SCI and follow-up SCI in Year 3

### **Observations, reflections and practical application from the field**

What observations, reflections and practical applications have you experienced?

“By realizing that our student's were not reading and studying as we expected, WEMS established an Enrichment class, which is at the beginning of each day, where we focus on

reading and study skills. Communication has improved with parents as we have increased the number of mailings to them. Middle school students do not like to be bothered with taking information home to their parents, therefore if an important event or activity is coming up, we mail a newsletter, letters, etc. This has helped considerably with parent communication.” – Nancy Wilson, WEMS

### **Objectives and Expected Outcomes – Getting Results**

What objectives and outcomes have been realized?

“The index provides data in written form and graph form. The visual part helped faculty and staff to realize that the teacher's, students' and parent's perception on certain issues were at opposite ends of the spectrum. Realizing that this was an area of concern, WEMS intentionally added a School and Community Component in our Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. Communication with parents has increased, and reading and study skills have been targeted at WEMS.” – Nancy Wilson, WEMS

### **Cost and Availability**

Please see SCI Costs Sheet.