

Requirement #12:--Family and Community Engagement

Schools that become a center of a neighborhood or community—and not just a place to send students for a few hours each day—have historically higher academic achievement, regardless of the social and economic status of those within the local environment. When a school serves as a community “center,” school culture and climate extends throughout the community and not just within the walls of the building.

Atlantic Research conducts an analysis of school culture; analysis that consists of deep inquiry into counseling available to students, attendance of students, community and parent attendance at school functions, existing behavioral rules/discipline for students, conflicts, if any, that have historically occurred at the site, parental complaints, perceptions of the school by members of the immediate community, and a multiplicity of related factors more focused on *perception* than academics. Team members will be analyzing parent and community involvement, and will be reaching out to those beyond the school walls who affect the way students in the school are perceived.

Atlantic Research begins with the fundamental understanding that “family” includes far more than two biological parents and their children; at a minimum “family” (for school outreach purposes) must also include guardians, custodians, grandparents, step-parents, siblings and step-siblings. Consequently, after-school family activities that traditionally targeted only parents can no longer be presumed to resonate with extended families because they target only parents. The bottom line is, “relationship-building” starts, according to sociological studies, with acknowledgement of who we are seeking to establish a relationship *with*.

Atlantic Research also works with schools to either create or augment formal parent groups within the school (e.g., PTA, LSC, etc.). Stakeholders will have opportunities to participate in the reform process in tangible ways by active involvement in the school and by attending community meetings where the school leadership (with *Atlantic Research*, if requested) will discuss reform at the school, seek input from the community groups, request their involvement in more tangible ways.

Evidence of Effectiveness:

Atlantic Research has evidence of effectiveness in parent and community engagement through building the capacity of school-level personnel to effectively reach parents and community members. Atlantic’s goal is not simply to increase parent participation at school events or facilitate a certain number of community/business interactions with the school. Rather, Atlantic’s goal is the building of capacity in building-level parent/community outreach leaders for sustainability purposes. For example, Atlantic employs a Family and Community Engagement Coach in SIG schools most struggling in this area. The FACE Coach works with building level leadership to develop an outreach plan customized to each school/community. These plans detail outreach to parents, home visits, business outreach, etc. Each plan is customized to the school and community.