

Southern Regional Education Board – High Schools That Work:

Family and Community Engagement

Continuous school improvement is a social process drawing from the perspectives of and interactions between people inside the school and outside the school. A substantial number of practices driving continuous improvement come from sources outside the school. Such outside-in perspectives come from school reform providers and professional development trainers, parents, and community and policy-making groups. Parents, business and industry representatives, community members and postsecondary educators can help schools better understand whether graduates are leaving high school adequately prepared for postsecondary study and careers and what is needed to improve graduates' readiness for their next step.

Improvement efforts are most effective in a culture in which such endeavors are planned, intentionally supported, thoughtfully nurtured and carefully measured. By studying perspectives from parents and the community, schools and districts can draw upon the capabilities and engagement of all major stakeholders in developing a robust, collaborative methodology to lead continuous improvement, bringing constancy of purpose and the development of a school culture embedded with permanent improvement practices.

An integral part of the HSTW framework is to engage parents in planning and monitoring their children's educational progress through annual advisement meetings. SREB believes the key role for parents is to participate actively in planning for postsecondary success. HSTW coaches assist schools to develop a Career Guidance and Advisement Program that matches students with the same adviser throughout high school. The adviser meets regularly with students and annually with parents to plan the program of study and to report progress toward graduation. The Advisement Program also establishes connections to community-based organizations to support students and families, allowing for quicker notification of community support agencies when needed.

Another SREB focus involves the broader community through the involvement of business and community members on Career Advisory committees for all Career Technology Education Programs. These committees use the expertise of the business community to plan for improvements in programs. With the focus on improving the quality of Career Technical Programs, community involvement is essential through participation of Business and Industry representatives, who help to redesign career technical programs by participating in workshops and providing educators with expectations for graduates, real world scenarios and industry roles for project-based learning.

SREB also engages community members in the needs assessment process and encourages schools to include community members on focus teams. Postsecondary partners also create new articulation agreements and expanded opportunities for collaboration between the school and area postsecondary institutions.