Family Reading Night in Nashua, New Hampshire Equips Parents to Motivate Their Children to Read

Nashua, named by the Nashaway Indians meaning "beautiful stream with pebbly bottom," is New Hampshire's second largest city. Originally built during the Industrial Revolution around the now departed textile industry, it is home to Ledge Street Elementary school. Ledge Street is one of the city's most diverse schools drawing students from some of Nashua's lowest income neighborhoods. The school has implemented Solid Foundation as a part of their school improvement plan working with the New Hampshire State PIRC. Recently, during its Family Reading Night, several parents opted to participate in the Solid Foundation Interactive Reading workshop which equips parents to inspire their children to read for fun. The evening was planned in response to data revealed in their School Community Index report which indicated that both parents and teachers recognized the need for students to become more motivated to read. The evening opened with a pizza social and later turned to focus on family literacy. One exercise demonstrated how parents could interject questions and comments into the reading of any story to build anticiaption and interest during reading time. Another exercise challenged parents to build a story each parent adding to the story as they went around the room. In doing this, parents learned the importance of stimulating the child's imagination and the importance of using words to express what the imagination sees. The importance of listening was also exemplified as parents were paired and instructed to listen to each other for two minutes without interrupting. To ensure that all parents attending the event gained full benefit, a Spanish-speaking translator was provided and activities were planned for the students so that parents could focus on the content of the program. Karen Gerdts, the External Partner for Solid Foundation at Ledge Street Elementary, expressed that there is a critical point at which children no longer learn to read, but read to learn and it's important that parents understand this, and work with their children to build good reading skills. As the evening concluded, parents and students were directed to tables where family members could browse a selection of books and take something home to read. Debbie Uttero, the school's Adequate Yearly Progress facilitator, said that the school has had family pizza night in the past but adding the academic component made the evening even more purposeful.


Solid Foundation Building Block: Communication

As students progress through the upper grades, communication with parents seems to become more challenging. Information technology can provide a reliable two-way exchange of information and is helpful in bridging the communication gap between parents and school. Web-based student information reporting systems, sometimes referred to as "e-parenting," include a web host and portal system that helps parents stay informed and monitor everything from grades to lunch money. These systems allow parents to communicate directly with the school and teachers during times when the school's doors are closed and allows the school to respond to parents as time permits during their busy schedules. School websites not only provide access to electronic student reporting systems but offer other opportunities to keep parents connected to the school.
Solid Foundation Resources offers several ideas and suggestions for school website content that help schools keep the communication lines open between families and schools.

**Mortar Meetings**
The topic for November Mortar Meetings is *Getting to Know Your School Using the School Information Form*. The meetings will discuss the School Information Form as an important tool for the External Partner’s to use to acquaint themselves with the schools current practices and programs and assist them in laying a path for support and guidance as the school moves through the Solid Foundation process. Mortar Meetings are scheduled for November 17th at 1:00 PM and again on the 19th at 10:00 AM (both are times are Central Time). Contact Reatha Owen at rowen@adi.org to reserve your spot.

**What is Solid Foundation?**
Solid Foundation is a school-based team process that helps:

- Strengthen family-school connections
- Engage parents in their children’s learning
- Improve student academic and social learning

Working with an External Partner (a trained coach from the district, state, PIRC, or community group), the school adopts one of the Solid Foundation Paths. For more information on Solid Foundation visit [www.Families-Schools.org](http://www.Families-Schools.org) and select the Solid Foundation tab.

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**Denice Hildebrandt**
**Partnership Development Coordinator**
Academic Development Institute
217-732-6462 Ext. 10
Toll Free: 800-759-1495 Ext. 10
dhildebrandt@adi.org

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