



NEMCSA School Success Partnership

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I. Background and Purpose

a. School Success Partnership Program Overview

The Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency Inc.'s School Success Partnership Program (SSP) serves school-aged children and youth from Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade who are at-risk for academic failure. Students served by SSP are referred to the program due to academic need, poor attendance, aggressive behavior, crisis situations, withdrawn behavior or being untended. SSP Liaisons provide ongoing assistance to students, parents and teachers by managing students' problem areas with specific short- and long-term goals. Students with additional needs are provided supplementary referrals to community resources, such as educational services, community mental health clinics, shelters, private practitioners, the Department of Health and Human Service and Child and Family Services.

SSP began approximately two decades ago (1991) in response to community awareness that school failure was a complex, multi-faceted issue linked to chronic poverty, unemployment, juvenile delinquency, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, child abuse and neglect and a lack of parent education. Students served by SSP experience a variety of issues and conditions that affect school performance and create barriers to academic success including family issues (e.g., divorce, unemployment, death, etc.), attendance issues, behavioral issues, transitional issues, and unmet mental health and/or medical needs. The program collaboratively works with students and their families, school administrators, teachers and staff and community agencies in order to address presenting issues and meet students' needs. As a result of participating in SSP, students are expected to have increased school attendance; improved academic performance; an increase in parental involvement with their child's education; and family barriers identified and removed for student success.

SSP has become an integral resource for students, families, and schools in Northeast Michigan. In 2014-15 Academic Year, SSP was active in 23 public school locations within eight (8) Northeast Michigan counties, including Alcona, Alpena, Cheboygan, Iosco, Montmorency, Oscoda, Otsego, and Presque Isle. A 2014-2015 evaluation by the University of Michigan Curtis

Center Program Evaluation Group, assessing SSP, showed that approximately 62% of students participating in SSP demonstrated academic improvement. Parental involvement data indicated that 75% of parents participated in three or more school activities directly related to supporting their child's academics. SSP program administrators sought to extend their reach, with the goal of providing services to help more students in Northeast Michigan. Given the commitment to students and families and the positive impact that SSP has had in Northeast Michigan, the State of Michigan allocated another \$150,000 to the already allocated \$300,000 equaling a total of \$450,000 for the support of existing program sites and expansion to three (3) new counties throughout 2015-2016 which include, Ogemaw, Crawford and Roscommon. This expansion successfully totaled SSP presence in 28 public school locations, 11 counties and 28 SSP Liaisons, one Area Manager, one Budget Coordinator, one Director.

Continuing in 2016-2017, SSP lost the State Child Care blended funding partnership due to the program not meeting criteria. Despite losing this funding, by readjusting many sites and receiving \$450,000 from the state, SSP once again was able to operate effectively. Additionally, the SSP was implemented in two Alternative Education sites (Iosco and Ogemaw counties)

Currently (2017-18) SSP was awarded \$450,000 from the State of Michigan to enhance and support the existing programs. In December 2017, SSP was awarded an additional \$75,000 of general funds from the state of Michigan making their funding total \$525,000, which is 30% of the 1.8 million dollar total operating budget for SSP. As of January 2018, SSP staffs one Director, one Area Manager, one part-time Budget and Data Coordinator and 32 SSP Liaisons in 19 school districts in 10 counties, including a new Adult Education Liaison position that operates in 4 counties and a new Alternative Educational Liaison position in Alpena County. With this additional \$75,000, SSP was able to continue operating two programs that encountered other funding losses and hire an additional staff person for a school with very high need. Also, with the additional funding increase, SSP added hours for our data specialist and was able to increase continuing education training hours for our SSP staff focusing on *adverse childhood trauma* as the majority of SSP clients have been affected by some kind of trauma.

b. Report Purpose

The purpose of this report is to assess the current SSP in 10 counties in Prosperity region 3. The State of Michigan allocated \$525,000, 30% of SSP's \$1.8 million annual budget, to support and enhance existing programming for the 2017-18 academic year. This three month report intends to (1) document the support schools and families have within SSP (2) assess the impact of the School Success Partnership Program on four key performance objectives identified by the State in all program sites.

The performance objectives to be measured and reported include:

1. Increasing school attendance and decreasing chronic absenteeism;
2. Increasing academic performance based on grades with emphasis on math and reading;
3. Identifying barriers to attendance and success and connecting families with resources to reduce these barriers; and
4. Increasing parent involvement in child's school and community.

This report presents results based on SSP data from September 2017 through December 2017.

II. Methodology

a. Data Collection

Data collection for the progress report was conducted by SSP Liaisons who then entered all data into a data base system (Formstack) assuring fidelity.

The outcomes reported used SSP Liaison data collected between September 2017 and December 2017 including; monthly data reports, initial intake and exit reports and Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) reports. SSP Liaisons completed these monthly forms for every formal caseload student served from the date they entered the program to the time they exited the program.

SSP administrators and NEMCSA's Operations/Data Analyst analyzed all the data through the Formstack data base system. The administrative data includes well-established, validated measures to assess student academic performance, attendance, parental involvement and removal of barriers through community collaboration.

b. Data Analysis

Monthly comparisons will indicate improvements in the 4 Performance Objectives.

III. Results

a. School Success Partnership Program

The School Success Partnership Program has continued in all existing and expansion schools in the 2017-18 academic school year with the exception of Mio AuSable School and Crawford County. (See Figure 1/Table 1).

**Figure 1. School Success Program
Prosperity Region 3
2017-2018**

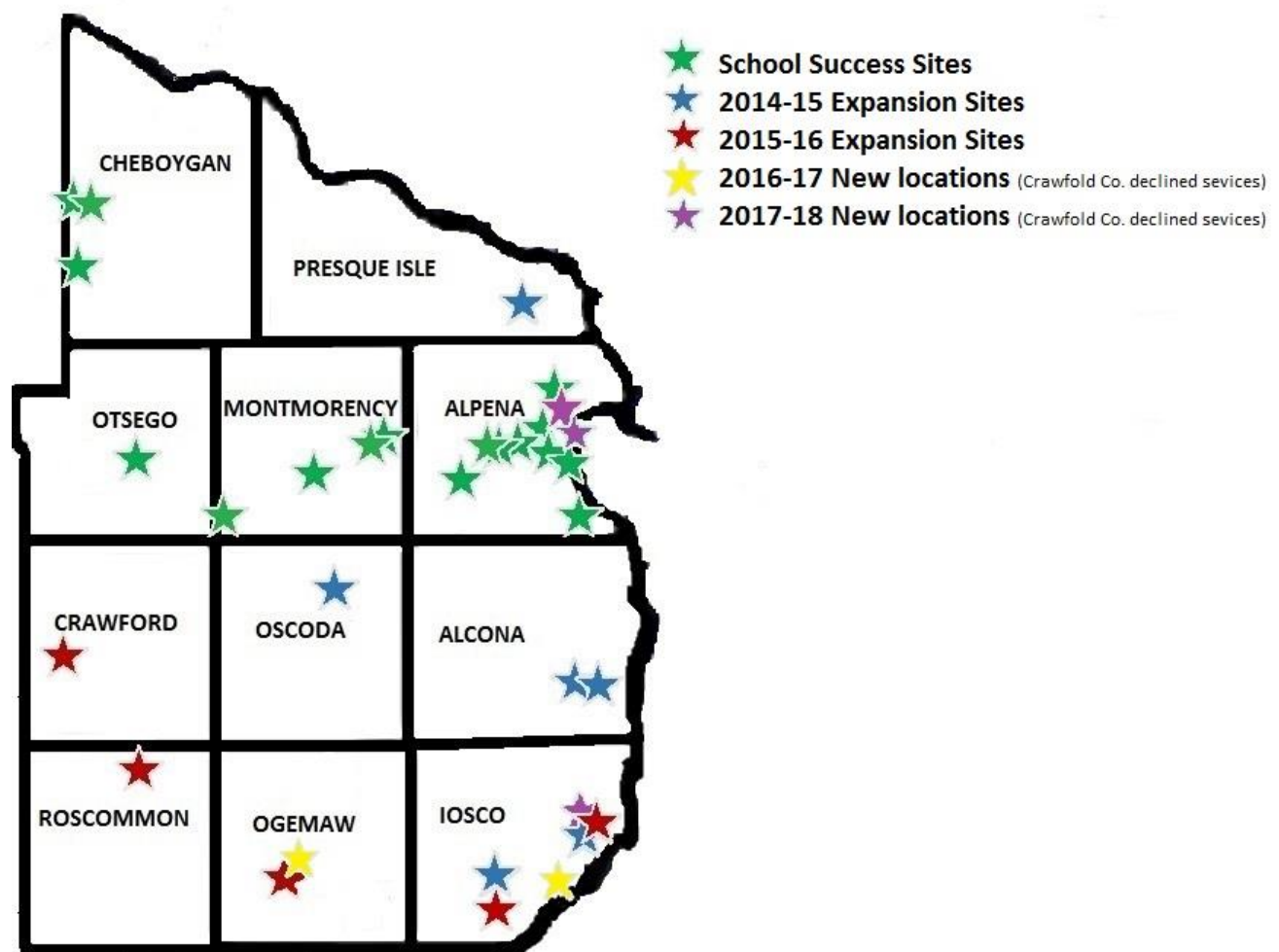


Table 1. School Success Partnership Program Sites: September - December 2017

County	School	How many students are in your school?	Number of FORMAL students on case load
Alpena	Alpena High School	1282	21
	Besser Elementary	450	16
	Ella White Elementary	461	20
	Hinks Elementary	150	18
	Lincoln Elementary	173	18
	Sanborn Elementary	176	18
	Thunder Bay Junior High -6th	863	16
	Thunder Bay Junior High 7/8		19
	Wilson Elementary	211	23
Cheboygan	Inland Lakes Elementary	312	21
	Inland Lakes Jr/Sr High	394	21
	Wolverine Schools	275	19
Montmorency	Atlanta Schools	241	18
	Hillman Elementary	201	20
	Hillman Jr/Sr High	240	18
	Lewiston Elementary	155	10
Otsego	Johannesburg Middle School	317	15
Expansion Sites 2014-2015			
Alcona	Alcona Elementary	303	25
	Alcona Jr/Sr High	425	24
Iosco	Hale Area Schools	335	16
Iosco	Richardson Elementary School	662	17
Oscoda	Fairview Schools	295	15
Presque Isle	Posen Schools	224	17
Expansion Sites 2015-2016			
Crawford	Grayling Elementary/Jr High	CLOSED	0
Iosco	Oscoda High School	529	19
	Whittemore-Prescott Elementary	450	17
Ogemaw	Surline Elementary/Middle School	1325	15
Roscommon	Roscommon Middle	254	15
Oscoda	Mio Ausable Schools	Closed Fall 2017	0
New position January 2018			
Iosco	Oscoda (grades 4-6)		
TOTAL			491

I. Strengths and Sustainability of School Success Program

SSP was developed in the rural context and is, therefore, responsive to unique needs of communities in rural Michigan. Particularly, SSP provides services to students and families primarily at school with home visits as needed. Therefore, SSP lessens transportation barriers as the ability to participate is not contingent on the ability of parents and students to secure transportation to and from services. Further, SSP does not utilize income-based eligibility criteria. This lessens stigma among rural populations that place high value on independence and self-reliance.

Another positive impact of SSP is its presence in ten neighboring counties. SSP services families who are more transient, moving from one school to the next or one county to the next. These families are able to access the program and continue SSP services which means students can continue to succeed no matter where they live or where they move to. SSP Liaisons are able to transfer student case files and information to each other quickly and thoroughly, thereby eliminating communication barriers between schools. This continuity of services and lifeline between SSP Liaisons creates a stronger program and smoother transition for students and families as they move.

The sustainability of SSP is because of positive data proven results, schools seeing high truancy reduction rates and continued available funding by all funding partnerships

II. Challenges of Sustainability

The major challenge of sustainability is securing funding from all current collaborating partners. This is primarily due to school budgets timelines not lining up with SSP budget timelines and other funding partners operating on different budgetary schedules. Also, the declining student population in Northeast Michigan equates to less school funding.

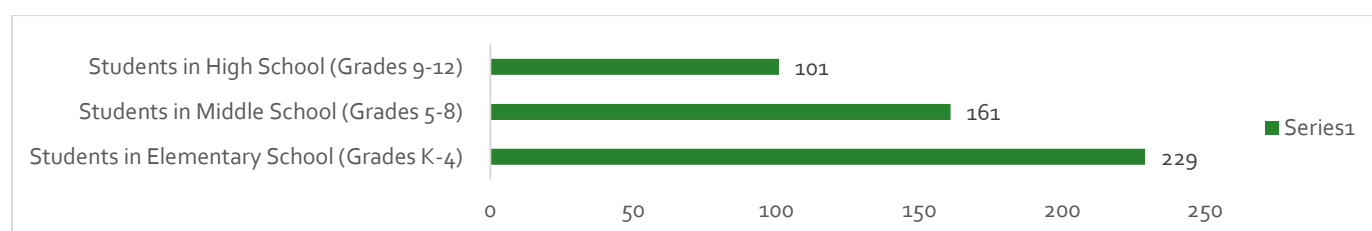
Finally, although SSP recognizes that a ratio of 450 students per SSP Liaison creates better services for students and families, many of the schools in our school districts exceed that ratio creating a need for more SSP Liaisons per SSP Program sites.

b. Students Served

i. Student Characteristics

Between September and December 2017, SSP has serviced 491 students on a formal caseload basis and served 889 students informally across 27 school sites within ten counties. Most of the students formally served (N=229; 47%) by SSP are in elementary school (K-4), while 21% (N=101) are in high school. Slightly more than 32% of students served are in middle school (N=161); see Table 2. A slight majority of students served by SSP are male (56%).

Table 2. School Success Students by Age

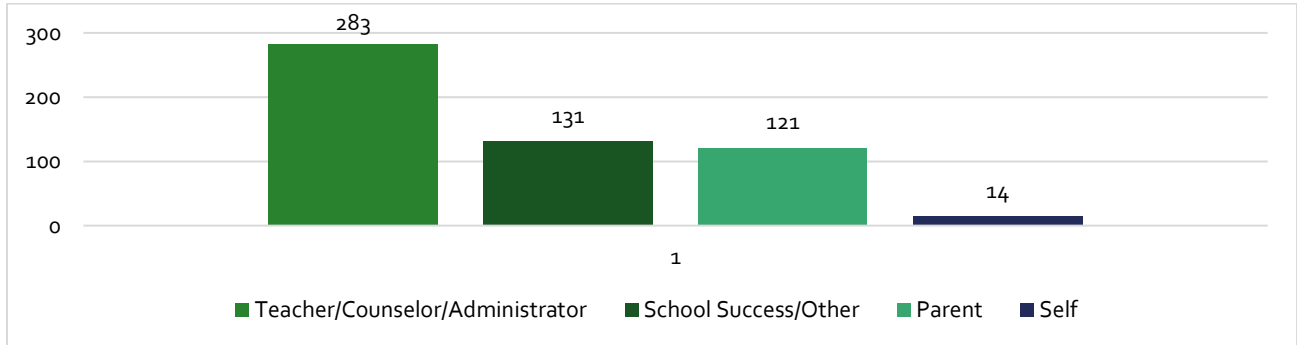


Though SSP does not have income-based eligibility criteria, 86% of students served are eligible for free and reduced lunch. In the state of Michigan for the 2014-15 school year, 46.6% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, with that number higher at 58% in Prosperity Region 3 (Community Health Needs Assessment) suggesting a substantially higher proportion of students served by SSP are economically disadvantaged when compared to students across the state.

ii. Reason for Referral

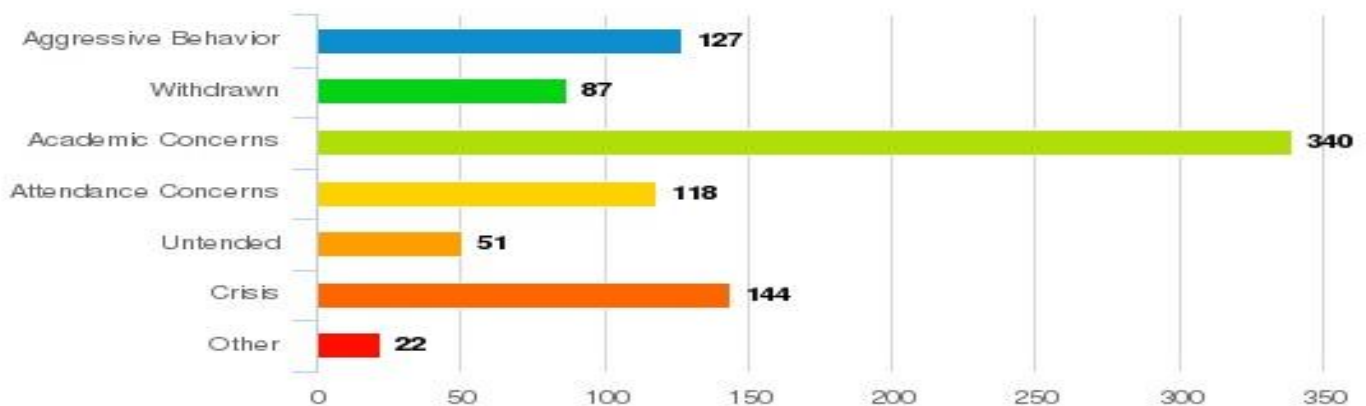
Students can be referred to SSP by more than one source. Over half of all students who entered SSP between September and December 2017 were referred by a teacher, counselor or administrator. Parents were responsible for about 25% of the referrals. SSP Liaisons and other community partners, including probation officers, school counselors, family members other than parents and school secretaries were responsible for slightly over 25% of referrals. It is interesting to note that 14 students self-referred, which speaks to the reputation of the program.

Table 3: Referral Sources



This academic year to date, students were most commonly referred to SSP for academic concerns (N=340), followed by crisis (N=144), aggressive behavior (N=127) and attendance concerns (N=118). Fewer students were referred as withdrawn (N= 87) and untended (N=51). It is important to note that students were referred to SSP for more than one reason so the reasons for referrals total more than the number of students served (N=491). See Table 4

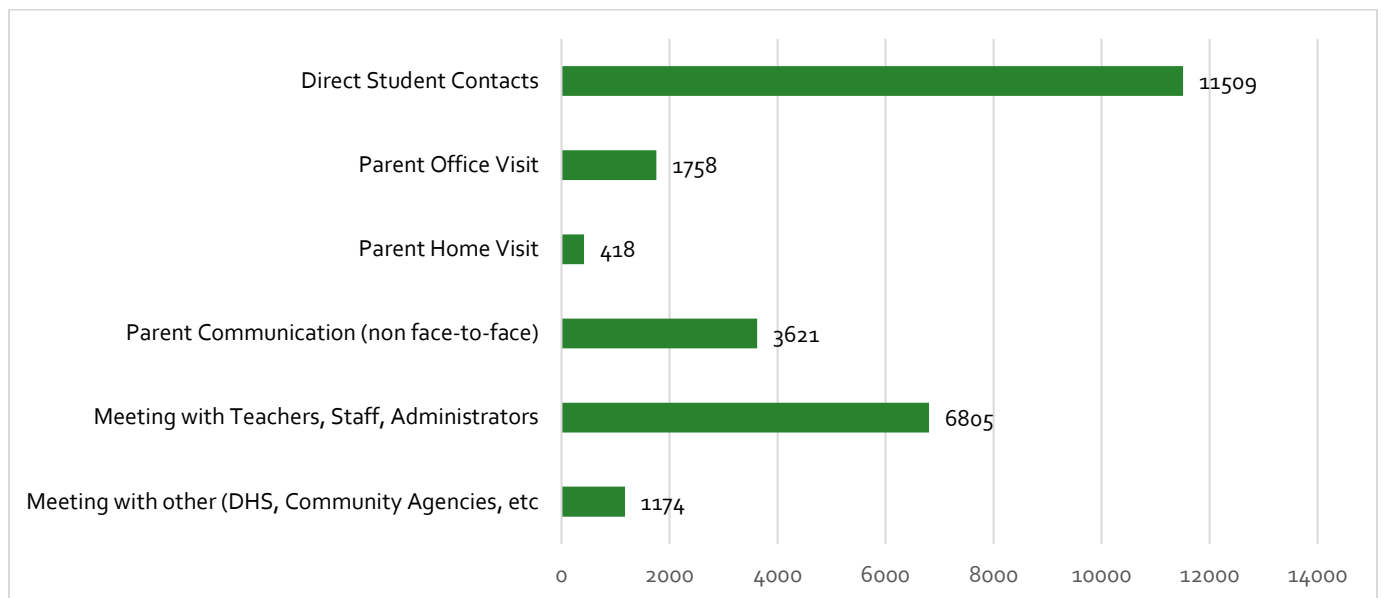
Table 4: Referral reason



iii. Contacts

From September to December 2017, SSP Liaisons had 25,435 contacts related to students they serve. (See Table 5). Almost half of these contacts (N=11,509) were direct, school-based interactions, in which the SSP Liaison met with the student at school to achieve Action Plan goals. 5,797 contacts were through parent communication either with an office visit, home visit or phone/email/text. Contacts with teachers and administrators comprised approximately 27% (N=6,805) of related student case interactions.

Table 5. School Success Program Contacts: September – December 2017



c. Performance Objectives

i. Increasing School Attendance and Decreasing Chronic Absenteeism

SSP believes that consistent school attendance is the single most important factor in making sure a child receives the best education possible. Since its inception, SSP has worked with school systems, law enforcement agencies, court systems and other agencies to address student attendance. As a result of this belief and community collaboration, SSP has developed and implemented a process to address this concern.

SSP Liaisons monitor attendance in their respective buildings and if a student has eight (8) absences the parent is notified by the liaison through a letter or documented phone call. Should the student continue to miss and have 12 absences, the parent is again notified by mail and the liaison continues to work informally with the parent to address the truancy and remove any barriers that may exist. Should the student reach 15 absences, a face-to-face meeting is held with the parent, student, the building principal and the assigned law enforcement liaison. At this meeting, a formal action plan is developed, signed and a release of information is also signed by the parent so any other professionals involved may provide information. If the plan is not followed, local family court personnel will conduct a Preliminary Inquiry to attempt to gain compliance. If necessary, formal court action through a petition and formal court proceedings may be requested if truancy continues.

From September through December of 2017, **810** first letters were sent out to parents indicating an attendance concern. With contact and interventions from the SSP Liaison, only **214** second letters were necessary and of those only **54** third letters were needed – a 93% decrease of a student with truancy concerns. With continued planning and interventions, only **eight (8)** students who were identified as having attendance concerns have been petitioned to the court system formally for truancy, resulting in an overall 99% reduction. It is a protocol that works and is based on building relationships between the school and home and not on punitive measures. Our final report in June will chart each individual school as well as total number of letters sent.

Of the 491 formal SSP cases, 118 had attendance related referrals. Of these referrals, 100 were identified as having an attendance concern along with other referral reasons and 18 referrals were for attendance concerns alone. Of those 18 referrals for only attendance reasons, SSP liaisons report that 67% of the students are staying in class more.

In conjunction with monitoring student attendance, as part of the monthly reporting process to SSP administrators, SSP Liaisons were also asked to report on increased student attendance in class. On the monthly case reports in SSP, 72% of students stayed in class more often. Ensuring that students stay in class more often is just as important as having regular school attendance. SSP Liaisons approach class attendance using a team approach with staff, student and parents

to determine the reasons for class absences and assist in creating a plan to improve student outcomes.

ii. Increasing Academic Performance Based on Grades with Emphasis on Math and Reading

Results show that of the 79 formal cases *closed* to date, 73% (N=58) of SSP students demonstrated an improvement in the overall quality of their academic work. Additionally, 51% (N=40) of SSP students improved both the quality of their math skills and reading skills.

Results to date, show that based on monthly case reports, 34% of students have shown an improvement in math from the previous month and 23% have maintained a grade/stayed the same as opposed to 21% not showing improvement. 33% have shown an improvement in reading skills and 24% have maintained a grade/stayed the same as opposed to 22% showing no improvement. Note that these percentages do not add up to 100% as some students are not taking a math or English credit and some students do not have data from the previous month.

Student grades, including overall GPA and grades in Math and Reading will be assessed as an indicator of academic performance for the final report in June 2018.

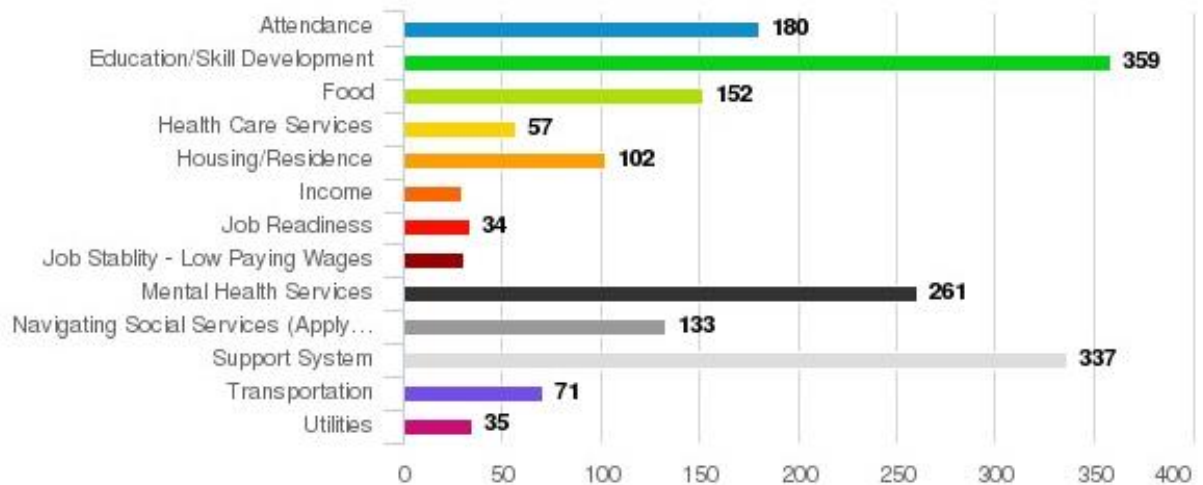
iii. Identifying Barriers to Attendance/Success and Connecting Families with Resources to Reduce these Barriers

Each month, SSP Liaisons document barriers to academic success experienced by the students they serve. Historically, data suggests that family issues, behavior issues and mental health or learning disability-related issues present substantial barriers to academic achievement for students served by SSP. This school year was no exception. Academic and crisis issues, the top two reasons for referral to the program, emerged as barriers to student success as well.

Once SSP Liaisons identify barriers to a students' academic achievement, they utilize a team approach to resolve barriers and increase the students' ability to succeed in school. This team includes, and is not limited to, school personnel, the student, parent(s) and other community resources. The most common approach to resolving barriers involves creating a plan or system with the student and/or parent or guardian. The plans often consist of strategies that students

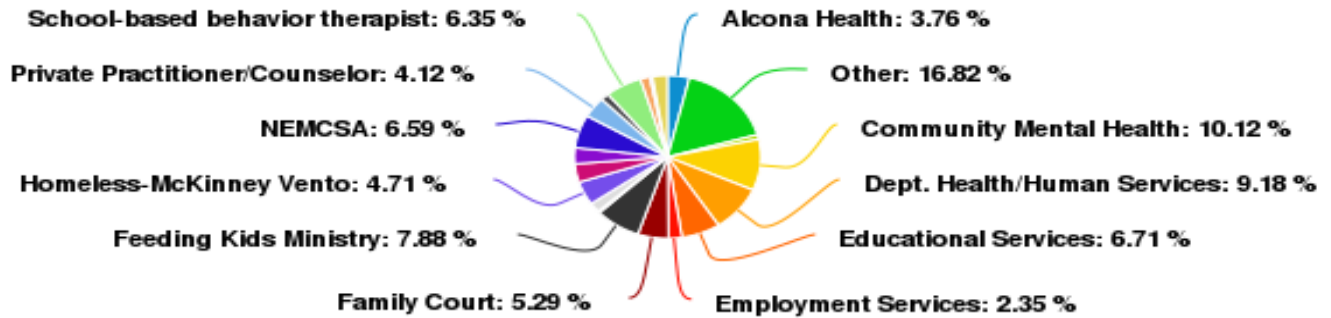
and parents can employ to overcome barriers. SSP Liaisons report addressing 1,688 barriers with students. See Table 6.

Table 6: Identified Barriers



Meeting and talking with students also emerged as an important strategy for overcoming barriers to academic achievement. These meetings provide an opportunity for students to share feelings or discuss issues they are having, as well as provide a venue for SSP Liaisons to offer important guidance and information. Additionally, SSP Liaisons described educating students and parents, by sharing information and building skills, as a way to overcome barriers. This information and associated skills are often used to support the plans collaboratively developed to assist students and families. Finally, SSP Liaisons provide referrals to help students and families resolve identified barriers that are beyond the scope of SSP. See Table 7.

**Table 7. School Success Referrals/Contacts:
Connecting Students and Families to Community Resources
September – December 2017**



Providing referrals and connecting students and families to needed community resources represents an integral part of SSP. In fact, from September to December 2017, SSP Liaisons reported making 1,174 either referrals and/or direct contacts to community resources. While SSP connects with a wide range of community resources, as summarized in Table 7 above, SSP students were most commonly referred to and/or liaisons directly connected with Community Mental Health (N=86), followed by Department of Health/Human Services (N=78) and Feeding Kids Ministry (N=67). This may reflect the barriers related to mental health, poverty and crises in the family found among students served. These barriers often prevent student success in the classroom and emerge in poor school attendance, poor class attendance and poor grades.

iv. Increasing Parental Involvement in Child's School and Community

SSP Liaisons reported engaging with parents 5,797 times from September through December 2017 through home visits, office visits, phone calls, letters and school meetings. Most commonly, SSP Liaisons and parents collaborated to implement a plan to improve the student's behavior or academics. Through these plans parents often employed strategies to help their child succeed, thereby increasing their involvement in their child's daily life both at home and at school. SSP Liaisons often provided parents with information and education about their

child's needs. Liaison reports indicate that parents sometimes are not sure how to get involved or what is needed to help their child. By offering this information, SSP helps to increase parental involvement.

Additionally, many liaisons noted that with the support of SSP, parents took an active role in participating in meetings with teachers, principals, and other providers in order to collaboratively address their child's needs. 75% of all parents have participated in at least one activity and 59% have participated in at least 3. Of the 79 closed cases, 80% of the parents increased their involvement. SSP Liaisons also documented that as parents increased their involvement with their children and other family members they were able to better understand their perspectives. Liaisons were able to facilitate productive discussion or dialogue between parents and children, and provide small group sessions for families to share and discuss issues they were having at home. Finally, some parents sought referrals from SSP to help themselves or other family members.

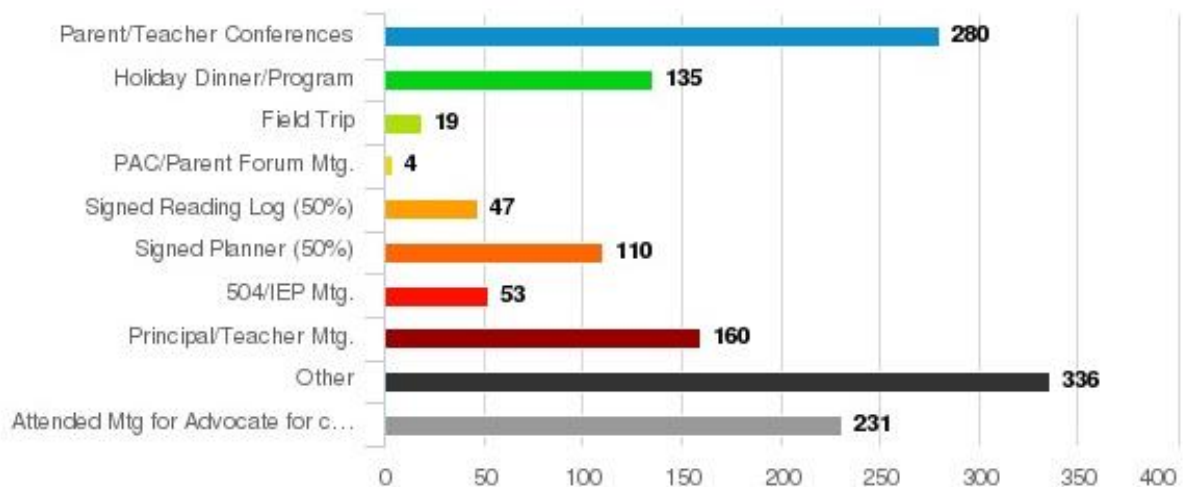
Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency requires all of its programs to complete annual Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) reports. The system requires each of the 38 programs operated through NEMCSA to set milestones to achieve and then compares annual accomplishments to projections. SSP uses their performance objectives as milestones so that they measure increased communication between home and school; increased school attendance; and setting and achieving action plan goals. For each milestone a projection of how many children/families will achieve that goal is set at the beginning of the school year. Progress is monitored throughout the year and then annual achievements are compared to annual projections. SSP has met or exceeded their performance targets (within the range of +/- 10%) for every year in the program's history.

Documentation from the first quarter ROMA report (September-November 2017) indicates that while in SSP approximately 85% of parents identified family needs, developed an action plan and agreed to the action plan in conjunction with the SSP Liaison. Furthermore, 88% of parents advocated for their child in at least one school meeting and 67% of parents participated in an initial home visit. Since this reporting is done quarterly and only two reports are required for

the State, the balance of the data collected will be reflected in June's year-end report (Formal students = 451 at the end of November, as opposed to the 491 in the December count)

In order to determine the extent of the parental engagement by families participating in SSP, SSP Liaisons also documented school activities each family participated in at least one time as well as the number of families participating in three or more school activities. Data demonstrates that, of the 491 students/families participating in SSP, 57% (N= 280) attended parent/teacher conferences, over 27% (N=135) attended a holiday dinner or program, and 33% (N=160) met with the principal or teacher to address student concerns. This engagement directly demonstrates an increase in parental involvement with their children and school. See Table 8.

Table 8



Further, data indicates that 59% (N=290) of families participated in three (3) or more school-related activities to increase their child's academic success. Given that parental involvement tremendously increases the likelihood for student success, encouraging parents to get involved is a key component of SSP model.

IV. Discussion

Currently, (Sept 2017-Dec. 2017) SSP is servicing 491 students formally and 889 informally. The most commonly referred to SSP by teachers/counselors/school administrators (58%; N=283).

The primary reasons for referral were academic concerns and crisis concerns. In order to support and assist students and families in addressing these concerns and increasing academic performance, in the four short months between September 2017 and December 2017, SSP Liaisons made 25,435 contacts on behalf of the students and families. The majority of these contacts consisted of direct interaction with the students and families either at the school or at the student's home. It is important to note that the structure of SSP likely decreases many substantial barriers faced by rural populations. Students and families do not have to secure transportation in order to receive services. SSP Liaisons meet students at school, schedule home visits as needed, and take students and families to appointments. Further, the program is free for students and families, eliminating cost barriers, and does not have income-based eligibility criteria which lessens stigma that may be associated with utilizing public services. This stigma may be exacerbated by the rural nature of service delivery where everyone knows everybody.

As of December 2017, students who had been served by SSP since September 2017 were making significant progress related to the program's four performance objectives (1. improved attendance; 2. improved math and reading scores; 3. increased parental involvement; and 4. identifying barriers to success and connecting families with resources to reduce these barriers). Specifically, at this point, not even half way through the school year, schools collaborating with SSP have seen a 99% improvement in truancy rates.

Additionally, of formal cases closed to date, 73% of SSP students demonstrated improvement in the overall quality of their academic performance, with 51% showing improvement in math skills and 51% showing improvement in reading skills.

Furthermore, SSP Liaisons are actively identifying barriers to students' academic achievement and linking students and families to community resources needed to resolve barriers beyond the scope of the program. Between September 2017 and December 2017, SSP Liaisons made 1,174 referrals/contacts to community resources on behalf of students and their families.

Referrals were most frequently made to Community Mental Health, Department of Health and Human Services and Health Clinics and Feeding Kids Ministry.

Finally, SSP is strongly engaged with parents to help and support them as they increase involvement with their child, their child's school, and their community. SSP Liaisons reported parents engaged in 1,375 school-related events that demonstrated increased parental involvement from September to December 2017. SSP is actively helping parents to identify strategies to support their children's academic success and providing support in attending meetings and engaging with the child's school and community resources.

V. Next Steps

As the SSP administration continues assessing the SSP Partnership Program over the next six months, we plan to take the following steps:

1. Continuing to collect monthly data.
2. Surveying all school principals as to their satisfaction of the impact of the program.
3. Randomly surveying a statistical sample number of parents regarding their involvement and perception of barriers and intervention of SSP Program to their child's success utilizing survey monkey of the Formstack data base system.
4. Obtaining year-end data related to the SSP truancy program to be reported in June 2018.
5. Completing and submitting the second required report to the state by June 30, 2018.

References

Data Source: National Center for Education Statistics, NCES - Common Core of Data. 2014-15.