



RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING

NICK LYON  
DIRECTOR

July 2, 2015

The Honorable Peter MacGregor, Chair  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on DHS  
Michigan State Senate  
Lansing, Michigan 48933

The Honorable Earl Poleski, Chair  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on DHS  
Michigan House of Representatives  
Lansing, Michigan 48933

Dear Senator MacGregor and Representative Poleski:

Section 1108(2) of 2014 Public Act No. 252 requires the Northeast Michigan Community Services Agency (NEMCSA) to provide reports to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) on January 31 and June 30 of the current fiscal year on the number of children and families served and the services that were provided to families to meet the following performance objectives:

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.*
4. *Increasing parent involvement with the parent's child's school and community.*

Please see the attached report provided by NEMSCA.

If you have questions regarding this, please contact Terrence M. Beurer, Director, Field Operations Administration, at (517) 373-3570.

Sincerely,

Nick Lyon

CC: Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on DHS  
Senate and House Fiscal Agencies  
Senate and House Policy Office

**Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency Inc.'s  
School Success Partnership Program**

Final Evaluation Report: September 2014 – May 2015

June 30, 2015



**School of Social Work**

Curtis Center Program Evaluation Group

**For more information, please contact:**

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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 (School Success) serves school-aged children and youth from Pre-Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade who are at-risk for academic failure. Students served by School Success are referred to the program due to academic need, poor attendance, aggressive behavior, crisis situations, withdrawn behavior, or being untended. School Success workers 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 Human Services, and Child and Family Services.

School Success began approximately two decades ago 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 School Success 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), 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 School Success, students are expected to have increased attendance; decreased behavioral incidents such as detention and suspension; improved academic performance, and advancement to the next grade level. Parents are expected to increase their involvement with their child's education.

School Success has become an integral resource for students, families, and schools in Northeast Michigan. As of the 2013-2014 Academic Year, School Success was active in 17 public school locations within four Northeast Michigan counties, including Alpena, Cheboygan, Montmorency, and Ostego. A 2013 evaluation by the Curtis Center Program Evaluation Group, assessing the School Success program from 2009-2011, showed that approximately 65% of



students participating in School Success demonstrated academic improvement and parental involvement increased for over 60% of students served. School Success program administrators recently 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 the School Success program has had in Northeast Michigan, the state of Michigan recently allocated funds for the School Success Program's expansion to four new counties.

## **b. Evaluation Purpose**

This purpose of this evaluation is to assess the current School Success Partnership Program and its expansion during the 2014-2015 Academic Year. The state of Michigan allocated \$300,000, 25% of the School Success program's \$1.3 million annual budget, to support exiting programming and expansion efforts. This 9-month evaluation aims to (1) document the expansion of School Success into four new counties in Northeast Michigan; and (2) assess the impact of the School Success Partnership program on four key performance objectives identified by the state.

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.
4. Increasing parent involvement with the parent's child's school and community.

This report presents final evaluation results, based on School Success program data as well as surveys of stakeholders including parents and principals from partner schools, from September 2014 through May 2015.

## II. Methodology

### a. Design

A mixed methods process and outcome evaluation was utilized to assess the School Success program's expansion efforts and student outcomes. The process evaluation employed a cross-sectional post-test survey of principals at partner schools and a cross-sectional post-test survey of a randomly selected sample of parents whose children currently received School Success services in order to identify stakeholder perceptions of the program as well as barriers and facilitators to program implementation. Survey results were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. These findings have particular relevance to the School Success program's expansion to four new counties between September 2014 and May 2015, and will inform implementation strategies for further expansion.

The outcome evaluation used a one group pre-/post- test design, in which Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted to determine change in student outcomes over time in the School Success Partnership Program. Student outcomes include academic performance with emphasis on math and reading, and attendance. Attendance was also examined descriptively using administrative data that tracks program involvement with students at risk for truancy. Barriers to students' success in school, including potential mental/behavioral health concerns, poverty status were assessed and reported via descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Additionally, descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were also used to document School Success referrals made to other community resources as a result of identified barriers. Finally, the outcome evaluation also used a post-test only design to assess parents' self-reported involvement with their child, school, and community.

### b. Data Collection

Data for the cross-sectional post-test survey of principals was collected via a web-based survey of principals at schools implementing the School Success program. Principals of schools implementing the School Success program received an email from School Success administrators on April 24, 2015 inviting them to participate in a web-based survey focused on their perceptions of the School Success program and its implementation at their schools.



Principals were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their responses were confidential. The email included a link to a web-based survey administered via Qualtrics, an online survey software platform. Twenty-eight (N=28) principals received the survey, and 26 principals (93%) responded.

A cross-sectional post-test survey of parents whose children were currently receiving School Success services was administered in May 2015. Parent surveys assessed parental involvement, parent perceptions of the School Success program, as well as sociodemographic characteristics and health and mental health concerns that may act as barriers to students' success. A random sample of 100 active cases was selected. Evaluators pre-packaged parent surveys with a self-addressed stamped envelope, allowing parents to mail completed surveys directly to the evaluation team. School Success workers distributed the surveys to the randomly selected parents in person, explained the purpose of the survey and its voluntary, confidential nature, and requested their participation. Of the 100 randomly selected parents, 43 (43%) completed the survey.

The outcome evaluation used School Success administrative data collected between September 2014 and June 2015, including intake and closing forms, monthly evaluation forms, and monthly tracking of program involvement with students for attendance and truancy-related concerns, as well data from the post-test only cross-sectional parent surveys administered in May 2015, described above. Intake, closing, and monthly evaluation forms are filled out by School Success workers for every student served. These forms document students' academic performance and attendance, as well as track referrals and barriers to students' success. The administrative data also includes well-established, validated measures to assess students' academic performance and screens for common mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. All administrative data was de-identified and parents signed a release of information form before their child's de-identified data was shared with the evaluation team. Administrative data tracking the School Success program's involvement with students experiencing attendance and truancy-related concerns was also used to assess the program's impact on this performance objective.

## c. Data Analysis

Qualitative data, comprised of open-ended questions on principal surveys, parent surveys, and monthly evaluation forms, was coded manually for themes.

Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and means were generated. Repeated Measures ANOVA was used to assess change in student outcomes over time in the School Success program.

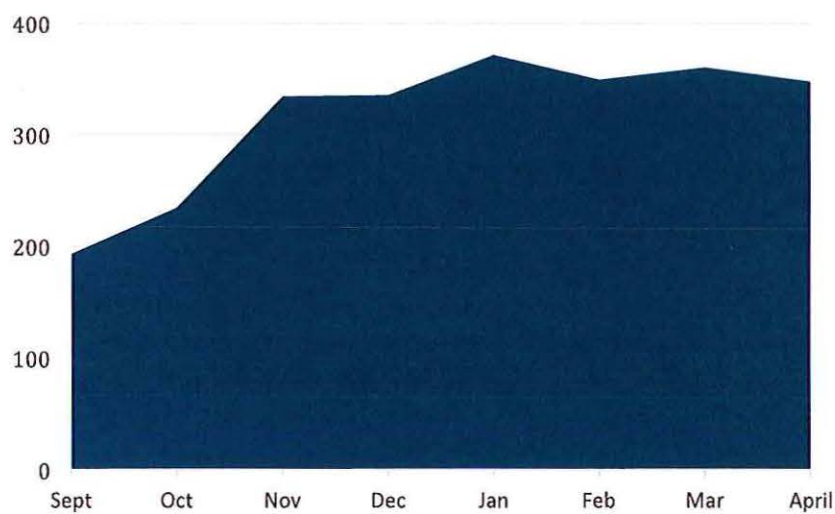
## II. Results

### a. Process Evaluation Findings

#### i. Expansion of the School Success Partnership Program

During the 2014-2015 Academic Year, School Success served students and families in 23 schools within eight counties in Northeast Michigan. This represents an expansion effort in which School Success partnered with schools to implement services in four (4) new counties: Alcona, Iosco, Oscoda, and Presque Isle (see Table 1). The program was implemented in six schools within the four county expansion area between September 2014 and December 2014.

**Figure 1. Enrollment in School Success nearly doubled September through April**





Between September and April, 2015, 24 School Success workers served 537 students. Staff turnover among School Success workers was very low, with only one staffing change over the course of the academic year. All School Success workers hired for expansion sites were retained and will continue providing services next year. The low turnover is particularly important for continuity of services and building rapport with students and families, as well as school administrators, teachers, and staff.

Table 1. School Success Partnership Program Sites: September – April 2015

County	School Name	Number of Students in the School	Number of Students in School Success	Date Became School Success Site
Alpena	Alpena High School	360	23	--
	Besser Elementary	359	18	--
	Ella White Elementary	431	16	--
	Hinks Elementary	140	17	--
	Lincoln Elementary	150	14	--
	Sanborn Elementary	187	21	--
	Thunder Bay Jr. High	486	56	--
	Wilson Elementary	250	27	--
Cheboygan	Cheboygan Area High School	756	23	--
	Inland Lakes Elementary	390	36	--
	Inland Lakes Schools	392	24	--
	Wolverine Schools	304	20	--
Montmorency	Atlanta Schools	259	23	--
	Hillman Elementary	253	34	--
	Hillman Jr/Sr High	240	22	--
	Lewiston Elementary	174	21	--
Otsego	Johannesburg Middle School	316	18	--
<b>Expansion Sites</b>				
Alcona	Alcona Elementary	365	24	09/02/2014
	Alcona Jr/Sr High	370	25	09/02/2014
Iosco	Hale Schools	240	14	09/02/2014
	Oscoda Schools	587	22	11/03/2014
Oscoda	Fairview Schools	304	19	12/01/2014
Presque Isle	Posen Schools	235	20	09/02/2014
Total number of students served by School Success			537	



The number of students served between September 2014 and April 2015 almost doubled (see Figure 1.), indicating that School Success is both needed and acceptable to stakeholders, including schools, parents, and students. One hundred twenty-four (N=124) students served over the course of the academic year attended one of the expansion sites (see Table 1). This represents almost one-quarter (23%) of students receiving services.

It is important to note that the 537 students served represent the School Success program's formal caseload. The program also provided informal services to 2160 students across the 23 schools in their service area during the 2014-2015 academic year. Informal cases represent students with chronic absenteeism who receive services specific to addressing truancy, students and families in crisis, and preventive services, including school-wide and small group programming.

## ii. Principal Survey Results

This section of the report presents results of the cross-section post-test survey administered to Principals in April 2015.

### Sample Characteristics

As 26 of 28 Principals (93%) completed the web-based survey, the counties represented reflect the distribution of School Success programs across the existing service area (see Table 1, below).









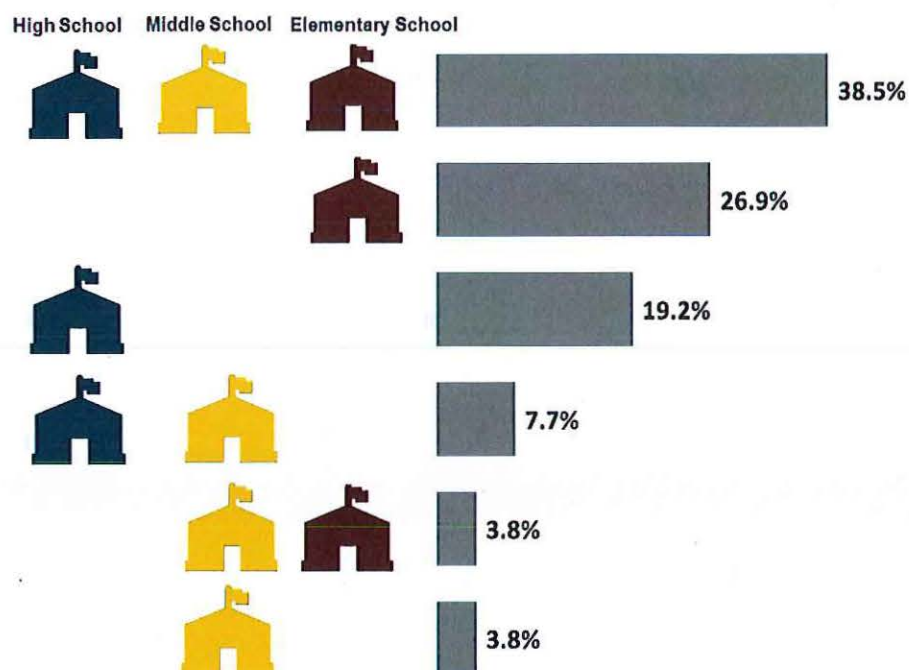
Table 2. Principal Survey Respondents by County (N=26)			
County	N	%	
Alcona*	2	7.7	
Alpena	7	26.9	
Cheboygan	4	15.4	
Iosco*	5	19.2	
Montmorency	3	11.5	
Oscoda*	1	3.8	
Ostego	2	7.7	
Presque Isle*	2	7.7	
Total	26	100	
* indicates expansion site			

Figure 2. Principals most commonly described having administrative duties at elementary, middle, and high schools.

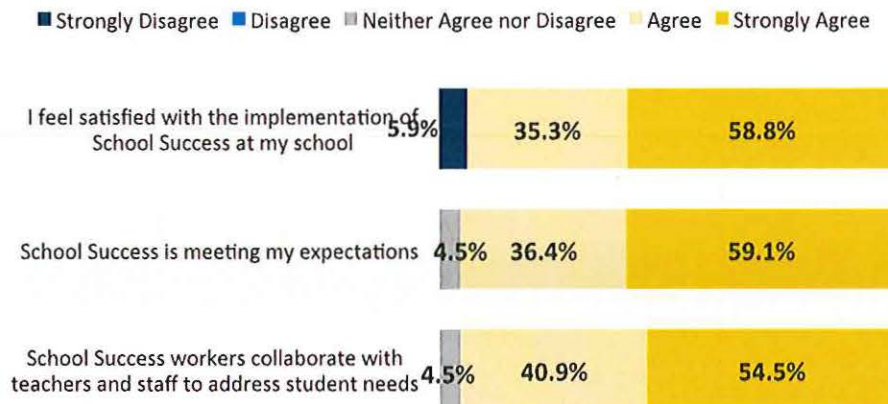


### Implementation of the School Success Partnership Program

Principals were asked five questions to assess the implementation of the School Success Partnership Program at their schools. Items related to principals' satisfaction with implementation, whether School Success met principals' expectations, and principals' perceptions of the interaction and collaboration between School Success workers, teachers, and staff. Principals were also asked whether they would recommend the School Success Partnership program to colleagues at other schools.

Principals reported a high level of satisfaction with the implementation of the School Success Partnership Program at their schools (mean= 4.47; *SD*=.96). In fact, 94.1% of principals (*N*=22) strongly agreed or agreed that they felt satisfied with the implementation of School Success. Similarly, 95.5% of principals who responded (*N*=23) strongly agreed or agreed that the School Success program was meeting their expectations (mean= 4.57; *SD*=.59).

Principals also overwhelmingly endorsed collaboration between School Success workers, teachers, and staff (mean=4.52;  $SD=.59$ ), with 95.4% of principals reporting that they strongly agreed or agreed that School Success workers collaborate with teachers and staff to address student needs. Principals rated their level of agreement on a five point Likert scale that ranged from zero (0) strongly disagree to five (5) strongly agree.



Principals were also asked about the frequency of their own interactions with School Success workers. Principals rated the frequency of their interactions on a seven point Likert scale that ranged from zero (0) never to seven (daily).

Seventy-five percent (75%) of principals reported *daily* personal interaction with School Success workers (mean=6.48;  $SD=1.05$ ).

Legend: Never (Red), Less than once a month (Light Red), Once a month (Pink), 2-3 times a month (Light Blue), Once a week (Blue), 2-3 times a week (Dark Blue), Daily (Black)

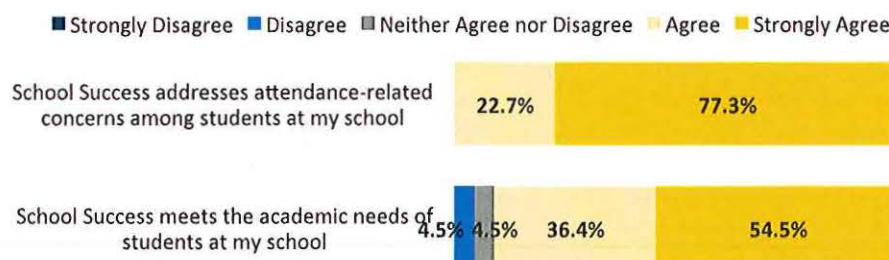


### Perceived Impact of School Success Partnership Program on Students Served

Principals were also asked about the impact of the School Success Partnership program on students receiving services at their schools. Specifically, principals were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements asking if the School Success program addressed attendance-



related concerns and the academic needs among their students. Principals rated their level of agreement on a five point Likert scale that ranged from zero (0) strongly disagree to five (5) strongly agree.



Principals overwhelmingly indicated that School Success positively impacted attendance-related concerns among students at their school, with 100% of principals who responded reporting that they strongly agreed or agreed that School Success addresses attendance-related concerns (mean=4.78;  $SD=.42$ ).

Responses also indicate that School Success addresses students' academic needs, as 91% of principals strongly agreed or agreed that the program meets the academic needs of students at their schools (mean=4.43;  $SD=.79$ ).

### Principal Perceptions of the School Success Program

Results presented in this section of the report focus on three open-ended survey questions in order to provide School Success administrators and stakeholders with important insight to implementation facilitators and barriers. Principals were asked to identify what was working well with the School Success program, as well as areas for improvement. Finally Principals were asked whether they would recommend the School Success program to a colleague at another school, and why or why not.

### Program Strengths

Principals identified three core strengths of the School Success Partnership program, including improved engagement with at-risk students and families; the cohesive integration of School Success workers within their school; and the opportunity to address students' need that would otherwise go unmet.

### Improved Engagement with At-Risk Students and Families

Principals most commonly mentioned the School Success program's ability to improve engagement with at-risk students and families as a strength. Most notably, principals often explained that School Success workers act as the link between families and the school, connecting with families who have not previously been involved with their children or the school and bringing them to the

table. To this end, one principal noted that School Success has the "ability to involve students and families that would otherwise not be engaged."

Another principal shared that School Success is "providing the liaison relationship between some of our at-risk families and the school staff. They provide necessary supports to our

families to meet basic needs – so kids and families can focus on education." Many principals placed high value on the way in which the School Success program addresses a broad range of student and family needs by having the knowledge and resources to provide appropriate referrals. As a principal shared, "[School Success] creates an important link connecting resources with at-risk students and their families. Our School Success worker is helping establish a better, more cooperative relationship with families who often have a history of negative experiences with school and breaking those barriers to communication and cooperation."

"SCHOOL SUCCESS CREATES AN IMPORTANT LINK connecting resources with at-risk students and their families. Our School Success worker is helping establish a better, more cooperative relationship with families who often have a history of negative experiences with school and breaking those barriers to communication and cooperation."



### Cohesive Integration of School Success Workers within the School Setting

Principals also identified the cohesive integration of School Success workers within the school

HAVING [SCHOOL SUCCESS WORKERS] IN THE building allows them to become part of the staff and full embrace the student - educationally, socially - and intervene with family issues."

setting as a program strength.

This is exemplified by one Principal who explained, "Our School Success liaison is part of our school's team and is willing to assist when asked with family and student situations." Another

principal noted the importance of having the School Success workers physically in the building, stating, "Having them in the building allows them to become part of the staff and full embrace the student (educationally, socially, and intervene with family issues)." In this regard, Principals also shared that this integration fosters the development and implementation of special programming and initiatives to further support students across the school. As a Principal shared, "Collaborative efforts with other staff to meet the needs of students. Current School Success workers are coordinating a student mentoring program that involves over 80 students."

### Opportunity to Address Students' Need that Would Otherwise Go Unmet

Finally, Principals feel that their schools would not have the capacity to address the needs of at-risk students without the School Success Partnership program. Specifically, principals believe that these students' needs would likely go unmet if

"THE SCHOOL SUCCESS PROGRAM IS ESPECIALLY critical to our district to support student attendance and [provide] immediate intervention to meet the needs of our at-risk students."

they were not partnering with School Success. This is explicitly stated by one principal, who shared, "School Success provides a support service for families and students that would otherwise not be available." Many Principals discussed the importance of School Success workers' ability to interact with students on a regular basis, and how this would not be possible without the program. One principal explained, "Daily contact [School Success workers] have

with students allows them to have a positive impact on these students' lives." Another Principal echoed this sentiment, stating, "Daily communication with needed students has been massive." Principals also specifically mentioned the attention School Success places on attendance-related concerns as being value added, and offering a service not otherwise available. As this Principal noted, "The School Success program is especially critical to our district to support student attendance and immediate intervention to meet the needs of our at-risk students."

### **Areas for Program Improvement**

When asked about areas for improvement for the School Success Partnership program, principals most frequently and consistently noted staffing and funding related issues. In particular, Principals identified the need for more School Success workers within their schools, as well as increased financial support for the program.

#### **Staffing Constraints**

Principals commonly suggested that staffing was an area for improvement within the School Success program, as many Principals reported that they would like to have more School Success workers serving their schools. As these Principals clearly stated, "It would be great to have another School Success worker" and "one [School Success worker] is often not enough to cover all of the issues students have." Similarly, another Principal explained, "We always need more help. If the ratio of SSW could be close to 150:1. It would certainly help with students who need to be seen more often than time permits." Principals also expressed interest in expanding the School Success program and offering School Success services year round. This is evidenced by a Principal who said, "Have [School Success] worker work year round and continue to work with students and families in the summer." Another Principal mentioned, "It would be great to see [School Success] expand to include more workers in more places."

#### **Funding Constraints**

Funding constraints, and the need for increased funding for the School Success program was identified by Principals as an area for improvement. Principals perceived a direct connection between funding constraints and the staffing constraints, described above, with one Principal



noting the need for “more funding to provide additional School Success workers.” Another Principal stated, “It would also be wonderful to see increased funding so that it’s easier to retain people in these key positions.” Principals also commonly acknowledged the limited resources and budgets available to school districts and suggested that the School Success program could

“THIS PROGRAM SHOULD BE OFFERED TO every school district in the state of Michigan. It is money well spent. It should be funded through the State because some districts do not have the funding available to have the program on their own.”

expansion.” Along the same lines, another Principal explained, “This program should be offered to every school district in the state of Michigan. It is money well spent. It should be funded through the State because some districts do not have the funding available to have the program on their own.”

be improved by securing funding from other sources, such as government or foundations, for support. Specifically, one Principal stated, “With tight school budgets, more financial support from the state or foundation grants to assist with covering the costs would help the schools and allow for more

### Recommending School Success Program to Colleagues

Principals were asked whether they would recommend the School Success Partnership program to colleagues at other Schools, and why or why not.

All Principals responding to this question (N=22) reported that they would recommend School Success to their colleagues at other schools.

When asked why they would recommend the program, Principals once again focused on the positive impact School Success has on at-risk students and families, as well as the need the program fills within their schools. The general tone of the responses is captured by this Principal, who said, “The difference I see in children from dysfunctional homes is amazing! It gives the parents some tools to better understand and work with their children and it provides a safe environment for the children to learn and

100%

of responding principals would recommend the School Success program to colleagues at other

increase their chances of academic and personal success.” In a similar vein, another Principal stated, “School Success is a powerful way to bridge home and school while providing extra support to students who need the extra help.”

Principals also brought up the cost-effective nature of the School Success program, as exemplified by these Principals who explained, “It is a cost-effective student support service that helps fill a great need” and “I think that it is a viable cost-effective measure to assist students.”

Finally, Principals discussed their willingness to recommend the School Success program to colleagues because of the nature of the School Success program itself, identifying qualified staff and the proactive approach as particularly important factors. One principal shared, “It is a very proactive

program with very caring, capable staff. It makes a HUGE difference in our building.” Another explained, “It is a great program. The people in charge are all about assisting kids and their families. They want to see students be successful.” Again, Principals focused on the value added of School Success, with this Principal noting, “I feel our worker has access and knowledge of ways to help our students that we aren’t able to provide with our school counseling.” Another principal reiterated the fact that without School Success, many of these students and families’ needs would go un-addressed, explaining, “With the ever-shrinking school budgets and the ever-increasing needs in our high poverty community, the School Success worker brings to our school services for children that simply would not exist without them.”

“WITH THE EVER-SHRINKING SCHOOL BUDGETS and the ever-increasing needs in our high poverty community, the School Success worker brings to our school services for children that simply would not exist without them.”

### iii. Parent Survey Results

Findings from parent surveys administered to 100 randomly selected families who were currently receiving School Success services are presented in this section of the evaluation report.



### Sample Characteristics

81.4% of responding parents were women (N=35) and 95.3% self-identified as white/Caucasian. On average, responding parents were 40 years old ( $SD=11.07$ ). Approximately 37.2% of parents reported being either divorced (N=8; 18.6%) or single (N=8; 18.6%), while a little more than one-third of responding parents indicated they were married (N=15; 34.9%).

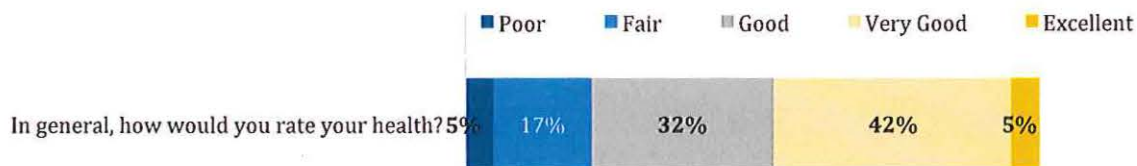
Parents responding to this survey represented children and families served in seven of the eight counties where School Success has been implemented. Almost 40% of parents responding to this survey indicated that their child received services in one of the four new counties included in the expansion effort (N=16; 37.3%). Among existing counties represented, almost 40% of parents who responded to this survey reported that their child received School Success services in Cheboygan (N=17; 39.5%). Equal proportions of parents indicated that their child received services in Alpena (N=5; 11.6%) and Montmorency counties (N=5; 11.6%). No parent indicated that their child received services in Ostego county.

Table 3. Parent Survey Respondents by County (N=43)		
County	N	%
Alcona*	2	4.7
Alpena	5	11.6
Cheboygan	17	39.5
Iosco*	6	14.0
Montmorency	5	11.6
Oscoda*	5	11.6
Ostego	0	0
Presque Isle*	3	7.0
Total	43	100
* indicates expansion site		

Parents were also asked about their health and mental health status.

Though the majority of parents surveyed reported having good or very good health (N=30; 73.2%), almost one-quarter (N=9; 22%) reported having poor or fair health.



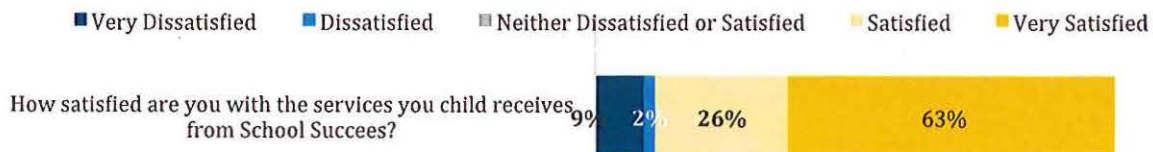


Additionally, nine of 40 parents (22.5%) who completed the Patient Health Questionnaire-2 (Kroenke & Spitzer, 2002) screened positive for depression and eight of 39 parents (20.5%) who completed the Mini-Social Phobia Inventory (Connor et al., 2001) screened positive for social anxiety disorder.

Table 4. Parents Screening Positive for Mental Health Concerns			
Patient Health Questionnaire-2 for Depression (N=40)		Mini-Social Phobia Inventory (N=39)	
Score $\geq 3$ indicates a positive screen		Score $\geq 6$ indicates a positive screen	
N	%	N	%
9	22.5%	8	20.5%

### Parent Satisfaction with the School Success Partnership Program

On average, parents reported being satisfied with the services their child received from School Success (mean=4.30;  $SD=1.23$ ). Almost 90% of parents indicated that they were very satisfied (N=27; 62.8%) or satisfied (N=11; 25.6%) with their child's School Success services. Parents rated their level of satisfaction on a five point Likert scale that ranged from zero (0) very dissatisfied to five (5) very satisfied.



It should be noted that some students and families automatically receive services because of truancy-related issues. It is likely that these families may be less satisfied with the program. Future evaluations should assess the potential association between involvement type and program satisfaction.

### Parent Perceptions of the School Success Program

This section of the report focuses on parent perceptions of the School Success program, as assessed via three open-ended survey questions. Findings related to these open-ended questions provide School Success administrators and stakeholders important insight to parent perceptions of implementation facilitators and barriers. Parents were asked to identify aspects of the School Success program that were helping their child or family, as well as aspects of the program that could be improved. Finally parents were asked whether they would recommend the School Success program to a friend whose child needed additional support at school, and why or why not.

### Program Strengths

Parents clearly identified three ways in which the School Success helped their children. Parents indicated that School Success provided Academic Support; Behavior Management Strategies; and Assistance with Crisis Situations.

#### Academic Support

Parents overwhelmingly identified the academic support provided by School Success as helping their children succeed in school. Parents discussed academic support as it related to both academic performance and attendance.

In regards to academic achievement, one parent shared about their child, "he has gain more confidence in himself and has been turning his assignments in on time. Raised his grades to As & Bs," while

**"HE HAS GAIN MORE CONFIDENCE IN HIMSELF  
and has been turning his assignments in on time.  
Raised his grades to As & Bs.**



another parent explained that School Success helps their child, “keep focused on completing assignments, organization, and study skills.” The impact that the School Success program has on addressing attendance-related issues was noted by parents as well, with this parent stating, “It has helped my daughter a lot, made her want to get up and go to school. This was echoed by another parent who said the following about the program’s impact on her daughter: “help[ing] her stay organized and keep her in school.”

“IT HELPED US TO GET MORE INVOLVED IN MY son’s homework and with getting to know his teachers and feeling not so afraid to talk with them. His attitude changed for the best. He is on his way now.

Parents also discussed how the School Success program helped them to engage and support their children. As this parent noted, “It helped us to get more involved in my son’s homework and with getting to know his teachers and

feeling not so afraid to talk with them. His attitude changed for the best. He is on his way now.” Many parents believed that their children’s academic progress would not have occurred without the services they receive from School Success. One parent explained, “It has helped a lot. If not, he would not be passing his classes.”

### Behavior Management Strategies

Parents also commonly perceived the School Success program as providing important behavioral management strategies that assisted their children both at school and at home. Parents also reported that learning about and understanding these behavioral management strategies is extremely helpful for them.

When talking about the School Success program’s role in address their children’s

“[SCHOOL SUCCESS] HELPED MY SON CALM DOWN and focus more at school and at home. Helped me to keep calm and focus also.

behavioral issues, one parent explained that the program “helps my son meet his class goals and works very well with his behavioral issues.” Parents often provided specific examples of behavioral issues addressed by School Success. For example, this parent shared that the program was “helping my daughter with her anger issues and giving her the tools she needs to

succeed." Similarly, another parent noted, "it has helped my son to deal with how to properly interact with other children."

Parents also often described learning and understanding more about these behavioral management strategies themselves as a result of services from School Success. Many parents discussed that the behavioral management component positively impacted both their children and themselves. This is exemplified by one parent who stated that the program "helped my son calm down and focus more at school and at home. Helped me to keep calm and focus also." Another parent shared, "It helped us all understand what will help [my daughter] and us to make her a better student. "

### **Assistance with Crisis Situations**

Finally, parents reported that School Success helped their children and families get through times of crisis. A variety of crisis situations were discussed, including chronic absenteeism, bullying, coping with divorce and death, and homelessness. This parent explained, "when my husband passed away, [School Success worker] was very good to my family." Similarly, another parent shared that School Success helped "with my son after my nephew (his cousin) committed suicide, also with my son getting bullied." Other parents shared that School Success offered assistance with securing basic needs. One parent explained, School Success "helped me find a house and Christmas gifts," while another noted, "we get food and Christmas presents."

### **Areas for Improvement**

Parents had very limited feedback when asked what about the School Success program could be improved. In fact, many parents indicated that they didn't feel there was anything that needed to be improved. The feedback that was shared regarding potential improvements focused on increasing the scope of existing services. One parent shared, "More! More staff to help kids!" It was clear that parents viewed the need for more staff as important, as it impacted the intensity of services. For example, a parent discussed wanting "more parent contact when there are positive things my son does, not just the bad," while another noted, "School Success could be in contact more often." Parents also expressed a desire for "summer services." It was also clear that parents understood the constraints facing School Success, and mentioned the need for increased funding to support hire more staff and offer additional services. As this parent stated, "they could use more funding so they could get the resources."



## Recommending the School Success Program to a Friend

Forty of the 43  
responded to the  
that they would  
School Success  
friend.

"I SEE THAT [SCHOOL SUCCESS] WORKS.  
I was very apprehensive of it at first but I  
see how it has helped my child."

parents (93%) who  
survey reported  
recommend the  
program to a

When asked why they would  
recommend School Success to a friend, parents discussed the positive impact that program had  
on their children. As stated by this parent, "I see that it works. I was very apprehensive of it at  
first but I see how it has helped my child." Another parent shared, "I have seen a big  
improvement with my son attitude and school work." Finally, a parent noted, "if my stubborn  
son can be helped with structure, I believe in the School Success program."

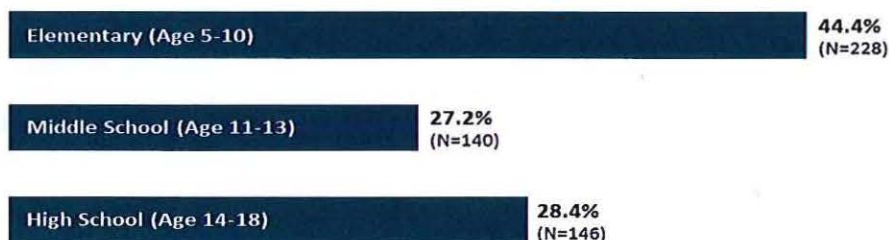
Parents again brought up the program's attention to behavioral issues and holistic approach  
when discussing why they would recommend it to a friend. One parent explained that School  
Success "gives kids a chance to help learn to deal with stress and help deal with anger" while  
another cited "help with family issues and problems we were having with bullying and  
teachers." Finally, this parent shared that the program "helped both the children and myself."

## b. Outcome Evaluation Findings

### i. Student Characteristics

Of the 537 students School Success served during the 2014-2015 academic year, almost forty-five  
percent (N=228; 45%) of the students were in elementary school, while 28% (N=146) were in  
high school and 27% were in middle school (N=140; see Figure 3).

**Figure 3. School Success Students Served by School Type.**





On average, students served in the program during the 2014-2015 academic year were eleven years of age ( $SD=3.5$ ) and in the sixth grade (see Table 5). The majority of students served by School Success were male (60%).

**Table 5. Characteristics of Students Served by the School Success Partnership Program: September 2014 – April 2015**

County	School Name	Students Served	Gender	Age		Grade Level		Free & Reduced Lunch	Current IEP	Current 504
Existing Sites			% Male	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	% Eligible	% Yes	% Yes
Alpena	Alpena High School	23	45%	14.2	9.3	9.3	0.8	87%	20%	15%
	Besser Elementary	18	67%	7.2	2.9	2.9	1.5	78%	6%	0%
	Ella White Elementary	16	81%	7.3	3.2	3.2	1.8	93%	6%	6%
	Hinks Elementary	17	76%	8.4	3.7	3.7	1.3	86%	12%	33%
	Lincoln Elementary	14	71%	8.6	3.2	3.2	1.3	100%	7%	0%
	Sanborn Elementary	21	67%	8.1	3.5	3.5	1.3	94%	5%	10%
	Thunder Bay Junior High	56	50%	12.4	6.9	6.9	0.9	86%	24%	26%
Cheboygan	Wilson Elementary	27	52%	7.3	2.7	2.7	1.4	79%	7%	7%
	Cheboygan High School	23	17%	14.2	8.9	8.9	0.9	100%	14%	10%
	Inland Lakes Elementary	36	50%	7.8	2.7	2.7	1.7	73%	9%	0%
	Inland Lakes	24	38%	14.5	9.2	9.2	1.8	100%	13%	55%
Montmorency	Wolverine	20	55%	14.8	8.9	8.9	1.8	75%	11%	22%
	Atlanta Schools	23	74%	10.8	6.6	6.6	3.0	86%	43%	5%
	Hillman Elementary	34	74%	9.2	4.2	4.2	1.1	71%	15%	6%
	Hillman High School	22	68%	14.6	8.5	8.5	1.5	75%	23%	18%
Otsego	Lewiston Elementary	21	53%	9.3	4.3	4.3	1.6	52%	0%	0%
	Johannesburg Middle School	18	56%	10.9	5.6	5.6	2.7	61%	29%	39%
Expansion Sites										
Alcona	Alcona Elementary	24	79%	2.4	3.5	3.5	1.9	80%	23%	4%
	Alcona Jr/Sr High School	25	48%	1.4	8.9	8.9	1.5	96%	4%	0%
Iosco	Hale Schools	14	93%	3.9	5.8	5.8	3.5	100%	21%	14%
	Oscoda Schools	22	68%	4.1	6.0	6.0	3.9	81%	14%	84%
Oscoda	Fairview Schools	19	58%	4.1	8.1	8.1	3.4	78%	21%	11%
Presque Isle	Posen Schools	20	70%	3.3	8.1	8.1	3.2	50%	10%	0%
Total		537	60%	11.1	3.5	6.1	3.0	80%	15%	13%

Though the School Success program does not have income-based eligibility criteria, 80% of students served were eligible for free and reduced lunch. Comparatively, 48.6% of students in the state of Michigan were eligible for free and reduced lunch in 2013 (Michigan Department of Education, 2013), suggesting a substantially higher proportion of students served by the School Success program are economically disadvantaged when compared to students across the state.

Furthermore, 15% of students served by the School Success program have a current Individualized Education Program (IEPs) and 13% of students have a 504 plan. As of the 2012-

2013 academic year, 13.5% of Michigan students had IEPs (U.S. Department of Education). Therefore a similar proportion of students in the School Success program have IEPs when compared to students across the state.

Additionally, the School Success program began screening students for common mental health disorders this academic year. School Success workers were asked to screen all students for depression (Patient Health Questionnaire-2; Spitzer & Kroenke, 2002) and anxiety (Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders – Brief Version; Birmaher et al., 1997) at intake. High school students, age 14-18, were also screened for risk of substance abuse (CRAFFT; Knight et al., 2002). Results suggest that of 507 students assessed, 33.6% of students screened positive for depression. Of 506 students completing the anxiety measure, 40.8% screened positive for an anxiety-related emotional disorder. Finally, approximately 11% of the 284 students assessed were found to be at increased risk for substance abuse.

Table 6. School Success Students Screening Positive for Mental Health Concerns at Intake					
Patient Health Questionnaire-2 for Depression (N=507)		Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (N=506)		CRAFFT Substance Abuse Screening Test (N=284)	
Score $\geq 3$ indicates a positive screen		Score $\geq 3$ indicates a positive screen		Score $\geq 2$ indicates increased risk for substance abuse	
N	%	N	%	N	%
160	33.6%	219	40.8%	30	10.6%

## ii. Reason for Referral

Students were most commonly referred for School Success services by their teachers (37.8%; N=203) or parents (24.0%; N=137). School Success workers and school principals each referred approximately 10% of students as well. Less common referral sources included school counselors and probation officers (see Table 7).



Figure 4. Teachers were the School Success program's most common referral source.

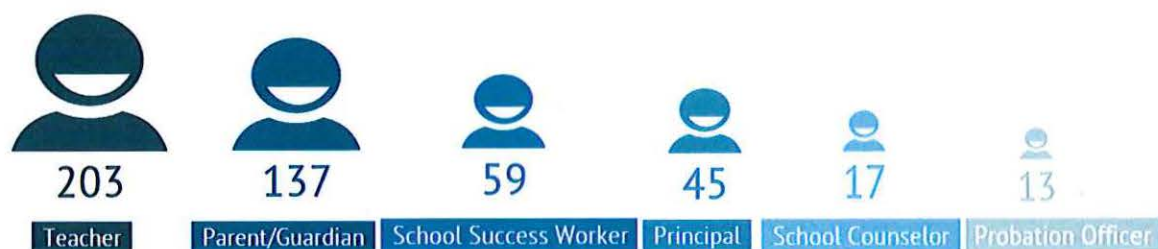


Table 7. School Success Partnership Program Referral Sources (N=474)

Referral Source	Total	
	N	%
Teacher	203	37.8%
Parent/Guardian	137	24.0%
School Success Worker	59	10.5%
Principal	45	9.2%
Probation Officer	13	3.4%
School Counselor	17	2.9%

This academic year, students were most commonly referred to School Success for academic concerns (N=312), followed by attendance concerns (N=179), crisis (N=139), and aggressive behavior (N=124). Fewer students were referred due to withdrawn behavior (N=76) or being untended (N=39). It is important to note that students can be referred to School Success for more than one reason so the reasons for referrals total more than the number of students served (N=869).

Table 8. School Success Partnership Program Reasons for Referral

Reasons for Referral	Total
	N
Academic Concerns	312
Attendance Concerns	179
Crisis	139
Aggressive Behavior	124
Withdrawn	76
Untended	39

### iii. Contacts

From September 2014 to April 2015, School Success workers had 28,499 contacts to support students they serve (see Figure 6 and Table 10). Approximately two-thirds of these contacts (N=18,770; 65.8%), were direct, school-based interactions, in which the School Success worker met with the student and/or parents at school. On average, students and families received between 6.5 and 9.9 school-based contacts with School Success workers per month (see Figure 5 & Table 9).

Figure 5. Average Number of Contacts by Month: September 2014 – April 2015

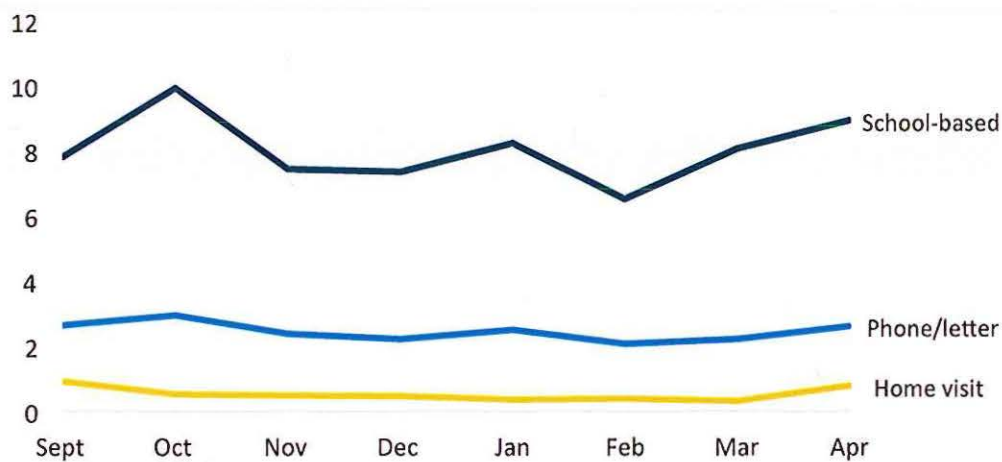


Table 9. Average Number of Contacts by month: September 2014-April 2015

	Sept	SD	Oct	SD	Nov	SD	Dec	SD	Jan	SD	Feb	SD	Mar	SD	Apr	SD
School-Based	7.8	6.9	9.9	8.6	7.4	5.3	7.4	5.8	8.2	6.9	6.5	5.4	8.1	6.9	8.9	10.2
Home Visit	0.9	2.4	.5	.9	.5	.8	.5	.7	.4	.7	.4	.8	.3	.6	.8	6.6
Phone/Letter	2.6	2.9	2.9	3.6	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.4	2.5	3.1	2.1	2.7	2.2	4.1	2.6	6.2

Almost 20% of School Success contacts (N=5245) consisted of phone calls and letters related to the case. These calls and letters may be to parents, teachers, staff, and principals at school, or community resources. A little more than 10% (N=3660) of contacts were classified by School Success workers as "other." When asked to specify these contacts, workers most commonly described face-to-face meetings with teachers, staff, and principals at school, face-to-face meetings with the students' other providers and/or referral sources, and accompanying students and families to appointments. Less than 5% of the contacts consisted of home visits (N=824).



Figure 6. Total Number of Contacts by Month: September 2014-April 2015

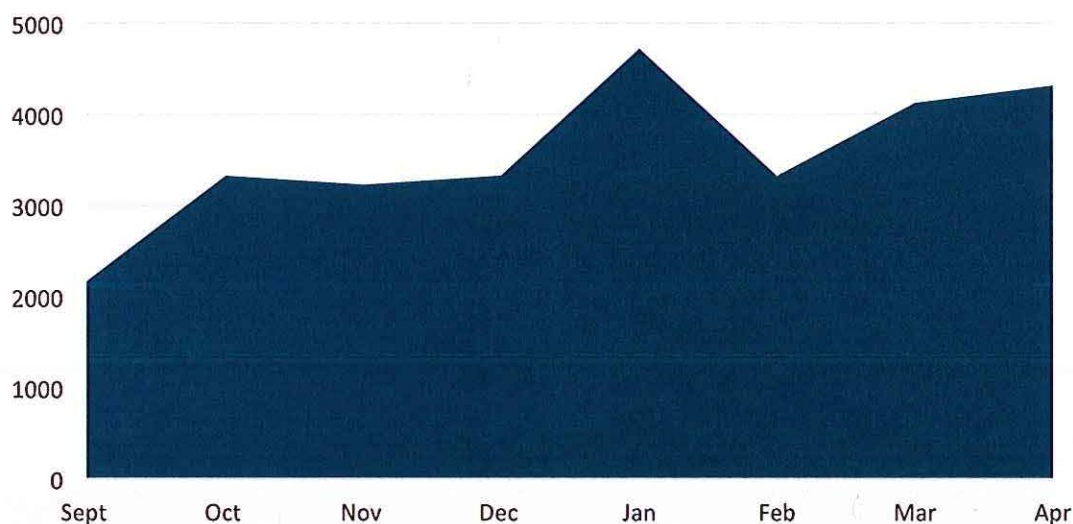


Table 10. Total Number of Contacts by Month: September 2014-April 2015

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total
School-based	1336	2261	2165	2132	2981	2123	2830	2942	18770
Home visit	105	80	102	91	92	96	82	176	824
Phone/letter	407	606	620	581	823	657	728	823	5245
Other	314	378	339	520	819	440	480	370	3660
Total	2162	3325	3226	3324	4715	3316	4120	4311	28499

## c. Performance Objectives

### i. Increasing School Attendance and Decreasing Chronic Absenteeism

Part of the School Success program's role is to intervene and offer services to students experiencing chronic absenteeism that may result in truancy. If a student misses eight (8) days of instruction, the School Success program becomes involved and makes contact with the student and parents. Involvement with these students and families persists if absenteeism continues, as School Success once again engages with families if students reach 12 and 15 absences, respectively. These contacts from School Success are designed to prevent petitions related to truancy.

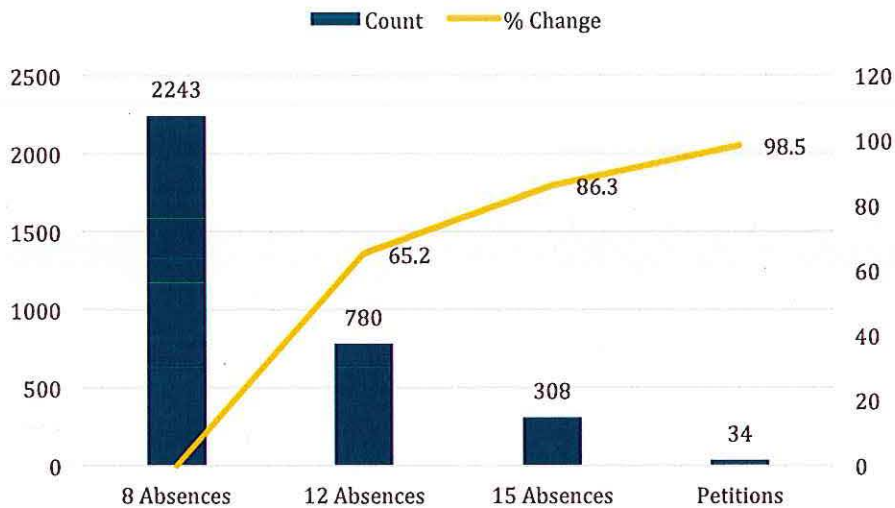
These students and families are offered School Success services, but may or may not decide to formally enroll in the program. Regardless of the families' decision about formal participation in School Success, the program facilitates attendance meetings with the student and family. These meetings result in a mutually agreed upon action plans that families are to follow in order to prevent future absences and ultimately avoid court involvement for truancy. School Success workers make contact with students and families if a student has another absence or there is failure to comply with the action plans.

Table 11. School Success Contacts with Students for Chronic Absenteeism: September 2014 – April 2015					
County	School Name	Students with 8 Absences	Students with 12 Absences	Students with 15 Absences	Students Petitioned for Truancy
<b>Existing Sites</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>
Alpena	Alpena High School	104	20	8	4
	Besser Elementary	39	13	3	0
	Ella White Elementary	186	54	2	0
	Hinks Elementary	35	10	1	0
	Lincoln Elementary	69	43	8	1
	Sanborn Elementary	26	11	4	2
	Thunder Bay Junior High	175	70	36	2
	Wilson Elementary	50	8	0	1
Cheboygan	Cheboygan High School	174	78	70	2
	Inland Lakes Elementary	189	103	41	1
	Inland Lakes	140	52	45	0
	Wolverine	21	4	0	0
Montmorency	Atlanta Schools	114	34	12	6
	Hillman Elementary	97	14	5	3
	Hillman High School	70	28	8	1
	Lewiston Elementary	32	11	2	0
Otsego	Johannesburg Middle School	142	0	5	2
<b>Expansion Sites</b>					
Alcona	Alcona Elementary	98	36	12	1
	Alcona Jr/Sr High School	78	25	17	3
Iosco	Hale Schools	20	6	3	0
	Oscoda Schools	325	148	24	5
Oscoda	Fairview Schools	2	0	0	0
Presque Isle	Posen Schools	57	12	2	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>2243</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>34</b>

Therefore, this aspect of the program, reaching out and supporting students with chronic absenteeism, is above and beyond the services provided to students on School Success workers' regular caseloads. Over the course of the 2014-2015 academic year, the School Success program was in contact with 2243 students who missed eight (8) or more days of school at the 23 partner schools in their eight county service area.



Administrative data suggest the involvement of School Success with students experiencing chronic absenteeism and its potential consequences, as well as providing the option of receiving services through School Success, leads to a substantial reduction in court petitions for truancy cases. In fact, only 1.5% of the 2243 students School Success informally engaged with due to missing eight (8) or more days of school, were ultimately petitioned. This represents a 98.5% decrease between students at-risk for truancy and actual petitions.



It is likely that many schools would not have the internal resources to reach out to students at-risk for truancy; therefore, the School Success program fills an important, otherwise unmet need that results in substantial cost savings to partner schools and districts. It is arguable that the School Success program's intervention for students with chronic absenteeism helped to keep 2209 students in school during the 2014-2015 academic year. Given the \$7,200 full time equivalent for students, School Success potentially saved its partner schools \$15,904,800.

The School Success program also collected administrative data documenting the number of days absent per month for students receiving formal School Success services. Data suggests attendance concerns were either not applicable, or mitigated, among the majority of cases. Please note that due to data integrity issues, data from Alpena High School were not included in these analyses. The average number of days absent among students continuously served by School Success between September 2014 and April 2015 ranged from 1.44 ( $SD=1.84$ ) to 2.00 ( $SD=2.46$ ), indicating consistently low levels of absenteeism. Given the stable attendance among this sample of School Success students, Repeated Measured Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

does not demonstrate a statistically significant pattern of difference in absences per month among students served by the School Success program between September 2014 and April 2015.

Table 12. Change in Students' Attendance Over Time in the School Success Program: Results of One-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA (N=82)

	September 2014		October 2014		November 2014		December 2014		January 2015		February 2015		March 2015		April 2015		F	df	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Days Absent	2.0	2.5	1.8	1.9	1.4	1.8	1.7	2.2	2.0	2.4	1.6	2.6	1.9	1.9	1.7	3.2	1.1	7	.38

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

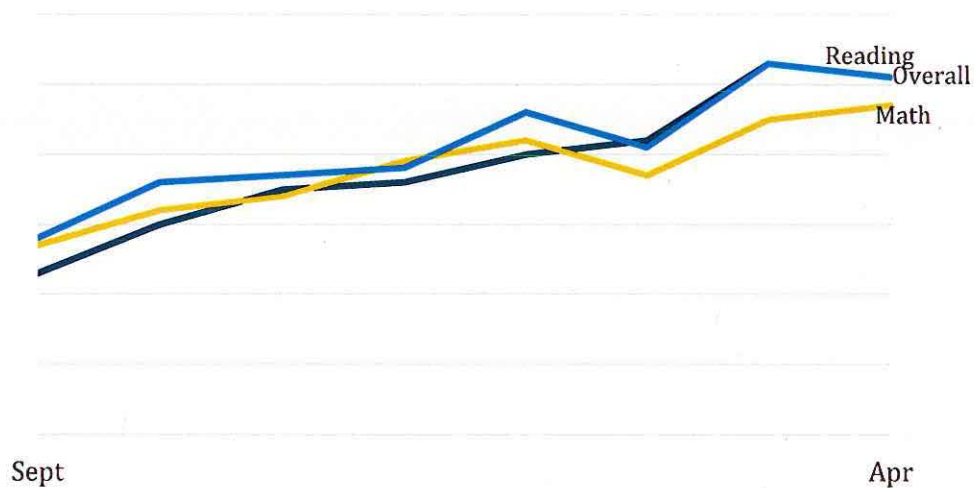
Academic performance was assessed via School Success worker ratings of overall quality of academic work, quality of math skills, quality of reading skills, frequency of homework completion, and quality of completed homework among students continuously served by the School Success program between September 2014 and April 2015. Due to data integrity issues, data from Alpena High School were not included in these analyses. These academic performance indicators reflect a modified version of the Academic Performance Rating Scale (DuPaul, Rapport, & Perriello, 1991). School Success workers rated the quality of students' academic performance on a five-point scale ranging from zero (poor) to four (excellent), and frequency of homework completion on a five-point scale ranging from zero (never) to four (very often), on a monthly basis.

Students consistently served by School Success during the 2014-2015 academic year experienced substantial gains in all academic performance indicators. The percentage of students rated as having average to excellent quality academic work went from 23% in September 2014 to 62% in April 2015, representing a 39% increase. This pattern was consistent when examining the quality of students' math and reading skills. The percentage of students rated as having average to excellent math skills increased by 24% over the academic year, going from 33% in September 2014 to 57% in April 2015. There was a 28% increase in the number of students rated as having



average to excellent reading skills over the course of the academic year, moving from 34% in September 2014 to 62% in April 2015. The percentage of students rated as having average to excellent quality homework increased from 38% to 57% from September 2014 to April 2015, rising 19%. The percentage of students completing homework often or very often also increased from 38% in September 2014 to 57% in April 2015.

**Figure 7. Number of Students Rated Average to Excellent on Quality of Academic Work:  
September 2014-April 2015**



There was also a statistically significant pattern of difference in overall quality of academic work, quality of math skills, quality of reading skills, and quality of completed homework among students continuously served by the School Success program between September 2014 and April 2015, indicating improvement in academic performance over time in the School Success program.

Table 13. Change in Students' Attendance Over Time in the School Success Program: Results of One-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA (N=82)

	September 2014		October 2014		November 2014		December 2014		January 2015		February 2015		March 2015		April 2015		F	df
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Overall quality of students' academic work	1.1	1.1	1.4	.99	1.5	1.0	1.6	.98	1.6	.97	1.7	.93	1.7	.85	1.7	.85	10.5***	3.4
Quality of students' math skills	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.5	.94	1.5	.98	1.4	.98	1.5	.96	1.6	.97	7.28***	3.8
Quality of students' reading skills	1.3	1.1	1.4	.99	1.6	.96	1.5	.99	1.7	1.0	1.6	1.0	1.7	.94	1.7	.92	4.58**	2.9
Frequency of homework completion	1.6	1.1	1.8	1.0	1.9	1.1	2.0	1.1	2.1	1.1	2.1	1.1	2.5	3.6	2.2	1.1	1.82	1.2
Quality of completed homework	1.4	1.1	1.6	1.0	1.7	1.0	1.7	.94	1.7	.94	1.7	.92	1.7	.92	1.8	.89	4.17	3.1

Note: \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \* $p \leq .05$

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

As discussed above, the School Success program began screening students for common mental disorders during the 2014-2015 academic year. Students' mental health needs, emerged as potential barriers to students' academic success, as high rates of students screened positive for both depression (33.6%) and anxiety (40.8%). **Though unanticipated, results suggest that both depression and anxiety symptoms were reduced among students participating in the School Success program.** Students' mental health symptoms were assessed at both intake and case closure. Paired samples t-tests suggest a significant decrease in mean symptom levels of both depression ( $t(81)=4.2$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) and anxiety ( $t(80)=4.9$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) among students in the School Success program whose cases were closed during the 2014-2015 academic year.

Additionally, each month, School Success workers documented barriers to academic success experienced by students they served. Thematic analysis suggests that behavior issues, family issues, and mental health or learning disability-related issues present substantial barriers to



academic achievement for students served by School Success. Health issues were also noted as barriers, but to a much lesser extent. As expected, academic and attendance issues, the top two reasons for referral to the program, emerged as barriers to students' success as well. The reported barriers and examples of each are included in Table 9., below.

**Table 14. Barriers to School Success Students' Academic Achievement**

Barrier	Number of Times Mentioned	Quotes from School Success Worker Report
Behavior Issues	454	<p>Student has been skipping class and sitting in the bathroom until class is over.</p> <p>Student jumped from 20 ft window</p>
Family Issues	322	<p>This student is dealing with the new separation of her parents and is having difficulty regulating her emotions in school.</p> <p>This student has been struggling with some family issues at home and has become very emotional and sensitive this month.</p>
Academic Issues	302	<p>This student continues to struggle with reading and comprehension, but has seen some success and is now more motivated to do well.</p>
Mental Health or Learning Disability-Related Issues	287	<p>Student has autism struggles with socialization has meltdowns</p> <p>Child has a diagnosis of ADHD .....trying to get back on meds</p>
Attendance	280	<p>This student has continued to be late or miss first hour.</p>
Health Issues	53	<p>Student was tardy and missed 2 days due to illness</p> <p>Student is legally blind in one eye</p>

Once School Success workers identify barriers to students' academic achievement, they work with students and families to resolve barriers and increase students' ability to success in school (see Table 10). 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. For example, one School Success worker devised a plan for a student having anger issues impeding success at school, in which the student would excuse himself and come to the School Success office when starting to feel irritated or angry.

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 a venue for School Success workers to offer important guidance and information. Additionally, School Success workers described educating students and parents, by sharing information and providing 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, School Success workers provide referrals to help students and families resolve identified barriers that are beyond the scope of the School Success program.

Table 15. Resolution to School Success Students' Barriers		
Resolution to Barrier	Number of Times Mentioned	Examples from School Success Worker Report
Partnered with Parent or Guardian to Create Plan	441	I have met with student, mother and future step-father to discuss issues at home. I assisted mom in setting up chores and appropriate consequences at home.
Created Plan/System with Student	424	Student will report to School Success Office before calling home for illness
Met/Talk with Student	233	I have begun to build a rapport with this student who is new to our school as of last month. She is seeking someone to be able to talk to besides her parents Talked with the student about a high school diploma being necessary to get into the post-high school program he wants to attend
Referral	226	Referral to DHS community giving program Referral made to Middle School Teacher Aide for after school homework help 2x a week
Provided skill/information	172	Worked with mother to help establish a concrete sleep pattern. Student now getting more sleep Using calming activities to help alleviate sensory issues

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 a venue for School Success workers to offer important guidance and information. Additionally, School Success workers described educating students and parents, by sharing information and providing skills, as a way to overcome barriers. This information and associated skills are often used to support the plans

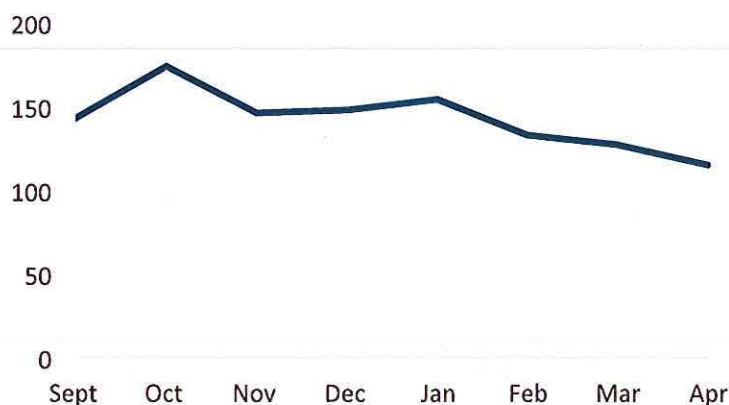


collaboratively developed to assist students and families. Finally, School Success workers provide referrals to help students and families resolve identified barriers that are beyond the scope of the School Success program.

Providing referrals and connecting students and families to needed community resources represent an integral part of the School Success program. In fact, from September 2014 to April 2015, School Success workers reported making 1140 referrals to community resources. While School Success workers refer students and families to a range of community resources, as summarized in Table 11, below, referrals were most commonly made to Education Services (N=196), followed by Private Practitioners/Counselors (N=195), Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency (N=136), the Department of Human Services (N=129), and Community Mental Health (N=128). The distribution of referrals may reflect the substantial documented barriers related to mental health and learning disability-related issues, as well as the high symptom levels of depression and anxiety found among students served.

Table 16. School Success Referrals: Connecting Students and Families to Community Resources									
Referral Type	2014				2015				Total
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	
Educational Services	22	33	21	28	25	16	27	24	196
Private Practitioner/Counselor	21	21	18	20	28	35	24	28	195
NEMCSA	17	16	16	17	21	14	16	19	136
Department of Human Services	11	20	25	16	17	13	13	14	129
Community Community Mental Health	18	24	18	18	14	16	11	9	128
School-Based Health Clinic	11	10	16	7	11	9	7	4	75
Family Court	5	5	4	12	12	9	8	8	63
Homeless Services	9	11	5	7	9	4	7	1	53
Child and Family Services	10	9	2	5	4	5	5	2	42
Mentoring	3	6	6	4	7	6	4	1	37
Salvation Army	5	7	7	3	1	2	3	1	29
Employment Services	5	5	3	4	3	0	0	1	21
Health Department	4	5	2	4	2	3	0	1	21
Shelter Services	1	2	2	3	0	1	2	1	12
Substance Abuse Services	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
<b>Monthly Totals</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>1140</b>

**Figure 8. On average, School Success Provided 143 Referrals per Month During the 2014-2015 Academic Year, with Referrals Peaking in October 2014.**



#### **iv. Increasing Parental Involvement with the Parent's Child's School and Community**

Parental involvement was assessed via parent self-report on the cross-sectional survey administered in May 2015 and School Success workers' monthly reports of parental involvement. The parent survey included a self-assessment of parental involvement. An established, nine-item measure of parental involvement asked parents to indicate whether or not they had engaged in activities related to their child, child's school, or community over the last three months.

Among this sample of parents whose children and families received School Success services, the most frequently endorsed activities included talking to a teacher about their child's progress in school (N=40; 93%); helping their child with homework (N=36; 83.7%); and attending a school play, concert, sporting event or other activity (N=26; 60.5%; see Table 17). These activities directly relate to the School Success program's areas of focus, as School Success workers help to facilitate engagement and interaction between parents and school administrators, teachers, and staff. School Success also helps parents to create plans to support their children, which often include homework help and checks.

It is also notable that 30 of 40 parents (75%) who completed the parental involvement measure positively endorsed engaging in three or more activities in the last three months.



Table 17. Parents' Self-Reported Involvement (N=43)

Item	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Have you talked to a teacher about your child's progress in school in the last three months?	40	93.0	3	7.0
Have you helped your child with his/her homework in the last three months?	36	83.7	7	16.3
Have you attended a school play, concert, sporting event, or other school activity in the last three months?	26	60.5	17	39.5
Have you helped with a special school project, school trip, or other school activity in the last three months?	18	41.9	25	58.1
Have you attended a PTA or other school meeting in the last three months?	12	27.9	31	72.1
Have you read a book or pamphlet about parenting or raising a child in the last three months?	12	27.9	31	72.1
Have you worked with a youth group, sports team, or club in the last three months?	9	20.9	34	79.1
Have you led a Sunday school class or other religious program in the last three months?	6	14.0	37	86.0
Have you attended a class about parenting or raising a child in the last three months?	3	7.0	40	93.0

Parental involvement was also assessed through thematic analysis of School Success workers' documented engagement with parents. This engagement demonstrates an increase in parent's involvement with their children and school (see Table 18).

Most commonly, School Success workers 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. School Success workers also often provided parents with information and education about their child's needs. School Success worker reports indicate that parents sometimes are not sure how to get involved or what is needed to help their child. By offering this information, School Success helps to increase parental involvement.

Additionally, many workers noted that with the support of School Success, parents took an active role in participating in meetings with teachers, principals, and other providers in order to collaboratively address their child's needs. School Success workers also documented that parents increased their involvement with their children and other family members by

attempting to better understand their perspectives. Workers were able to facilitate productive discussion or dialogue between parents and children, or provide small group sessions for families to share and discuss issues they were having at home. Finally, some parents sought referrals from School Success to help themselves or other family members.

**Table 18. School Success Worker Reports of Involvement and Engagement Among Parents: September 2014 – April 2015**

Parental Involvement	Examples Documented by School Success Workers
Parent collaborated with worker to implement plan	Worked with mother to establish an earlier bedtime. Saw behavioral improvement with increased rest. Parent now laying out clothes and making sure to check daily for cleanliness.
Parent received information from worker about child's needs	<b>Educated parents and child about the compulsory attendance laws</b> Worked with guardian to explain importance of medical documentation on file to exempt student from participation.
Parents collaborated with school and worker	Met with parents, Oscoda Probation officer and principal.
Worker facilitated meeting with family	I arranged and facilitated a meeting with this student and his mother [so] that he could express how he was feeling.
Worker and parent met with provider	I attended a doctor's appointment with this student's parents, his CMH counselor, and his doctor from Ann Arbor.
Parents sought referrals from worker for themselves or family members other than their child	<b>Parents seeking medical attention.</b> Have appointments set up at U of M next month.



### III. Discussion

The School Success Partnership Program initiated a large-scale expansion effort, doubling the number of Northeast Michigan counties served between the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 academic years. School Success met the state's requirement of expanding into four new counties by December 2014, with the majority of schools implementing the program in September 2014. As a result, School Success provided services to 124 students and their families in six additional



partner schools during the 2014-2015 academic year. This represents a 23% increase in students served.

School Success employed 24 School Success workers who provided direct services to students and families over the course of the 2014-2015 academic year. All but one of the 24 School Success workers (96%) were retained and will continue serving children and families next year. This exemplary staff retention has important implications for continuity of services, as well as the ability for School Success to build relationships and develop rapport with administrators, teachers, and staff at partner schools.

Evaluation findings also suggest high levels of satisfaction from multiple stakeholders engaged with the School Success program. Surveys of both Principals at partner schools and parents indicate that program implementation has met the needs of relevant stakeholder groups. Most notably, Principals reported that School Success offers services to children and families that otherwise would not be engaged by the school, and would likely fall through the cracks. Additionally, Principals noted that School Success workers collaborate closely with administrators, teachers, and staff, indicating that, on average, they interact with School Success workers on a daily basis. Parents also endorsed the ability of School Success to provide necessary academic support to their children, and particularly emphasized the ability of School Success to address their children's behavioral concerns. Parents viewed the use of behavioral management strategies as positively impacted their children's academic success as well as their own understanding of their children's needs.

Over the course of the 2014-2015 academic year, School Success served 537 students, the majority of whom were economically disadvantaged. Almost one-fifth of students served by School Success have Individualized Education Program and students in the School Success program screened positive for depression and anxiety at rates substantially higher than the national prevalence estimates for children and adolescents. This indicates that School Success serves students with a high level of need and with a myriad of risk factors for academic problems.

Students were most commonly referred to School Success by teachers and parents. The primary reasons for referral were academic concerns and attendance concerns. In order to support and assist students and families in addressing these concerns and increasing academic performance,

School Success workers made over 28,000 contacts with students and families between September 2014 and April 2015. The majority of these contacts consisted of direct interaction with the students and families at the school. It is important to note that the structure of the School Success program likely decreases many substantial barriers faced by rural populations. Students and families do not have to secure transportation in order to receive services, as School Success workers 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, but does not have income-based eligibility criteria which lessens stigma that may be associated with utilizing public services among rural residents.

Students served by School Success during the 2014-2015 academic year made significant progress related to the program's performance objectives.

School Success engages with students who have chronic absenteeism, making contact with all students at partner schools who miss eight (8) days of school. Evaluation results suggest that this attendance-related intervention has a substantial impact on preventing petitions for truancy. In fact of the 2243 students the School Success program served for chronic absenteeism, on 1.5% of cases resulted in truancy petitions. It is estimated that School Success saved partner schools almost \$16 million by working with these students and keeping them in school. It is also important to note that most schools would not have the internal capacity to provide this type of intervention for students at risk for truancy.

Additionally, students continuously served by the School Success program during the 2014-2015 academic year experienced increased mean scores related to quality of academic performance, quality of math skills, reading skills, and quality of homework increased over time in School Success program. Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance found that this increase was statistically significant for all quality indicators of academic performance identified above.

Furthermore, School Success workers are actively identifying barriers to students' academic achievement and linking students and families to community resources needed to resolve barriers beyond the scope of their program. Between September 2014 and April 2015, School Success workers made 1140 referrals to community resources on behalf of students and their families. Referrals were most frequently made to Educational Services, Private Practitioners and



Counselors, and Community Mental Health. Though anticipated, evaluation findings suggest that, on average, students served by School Success experienced significant decreases in symptoms of both depression and anxiety. This result requires further attention, as it is not clear if the decrease is related to direct services provided by School Success or due to appropriate referrals to address behavioral health needs.

Finally, School Success is actively engaged with parents and supporting them as they increase involvement with their child, the child's school, and community. A cross-sectional post-test survey of parents suggest high rates of self-reported parental involvement, particularly related to activities that directly support their children's academic success (e.g., help with homework; meetings with teachers; attending school events). In fact, 75% of parents surveyed reported participation in three or more activities in support of their children over the last three months. School Success workers also reported consistent interactions with parents that demonstrated increased involvement from September 2014 to April 2015. School Success 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.

### **a. Limitations**

While this preliminary evaluation report has many strengths, including the mixed methods research design and the use of established, empirically validated outcome measures, there are some limitations that need to be addressed.

One of these limitations relates to the measures. The performance objectives sought to assess increase in academic achievement based on grades, with an emphasis on math and reading. However, individual schools partnering with School Success do not consistently employ the same grading system. This is in part due to the fact that schools serving different grade levels (e.g., elementary v. high school) utilize developmentally appropriate assessment of academic performance. For example, high schools often use grade point averages to report grades; though weighting and ranges may vary across schools, while elementary schools commonly report rating categories such as proficient or satisfactory. Given the age range of students and different systems for grading across partner schools and districts (e.g., GPA; letter grade; rating category such as proficient, satisfactory, etc), it was not possible to use grades as an outcome measure. Additionally, the performance objective related to parental involvement was assessed via a

post-test survey of a random sample of parents. Though the parent survey utilized an established measure of parental involvement, the cross-sectional results do not allow for the assessment of change in parental involvement over time receiving School Success service.

Second, results assessing performance objectives related to attendance and academic performance are limited to an analytic sample of students who entered the School Success program in September 2014 and were continuously served through April 2015. This limitation is due to the fact that the analytic strategy, Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance, while appropriate, cannot account for missing data. In order to best understand the impact the program had on students over this time point, it was necessary to restrict the analytic sample to the students continuously served. However, it is also likely that students who received services throughout the academic year had greater needs than other students served. Therefore, the impact the program has on performance objectives may be underestimated.

## IV. Next Steps

The Curtis Center Program Evaluation Group conducted a comprehensive process and outcome evaluation assessing the School Success Partnership program's expansion effort as well as its impact on state-identified performance objectives over the 2014-2015 academic year. This evaluation built upon a previous evaluation in with the evaluation team retrospectively assessed School Success outcomes between 2009-2011. Throughout the evaluation processes, the evaluation team has worked closely with School Success administrators in order to develop the program's internal capacity to assess program outcomes moving forward. Given that results suggest successful implementation of the School Success program expansion effort, as well as positive outcomes related to all performance objectives, it is recommended that School Success utilizes the resources developed during the evaluation process, including evaluation forms and standardized measures, to engage in program monitoring and routinely examine primary outcomes, as identified by performance objectives, as part of standard practice. At this time, the evaluation team does not recommend on-going formal evaluation by an independent evaluator. However, additional formal evaluation should be considered if the School Success program is implemented outside of the rural Northeast Michigan communities it was designed and developed to serve or if substantial changes are made to the program's service delivery model.



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