



**School Success
Partnership Program**
a division of
NEMCSA
Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency, Inc.

Reporting Period: September 2015 – May 2016

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For more information, please contact:

*Dorothy Pintar
School Success Program Director
2375 Gordon Road
Alpena, MI 49707
(989)358-5006
pintard@nemcsa.org*

Program Reporters:

Dorothy Pintar, School Success Program Director

Julie Meyers, School Success Area Manager

Lisa Siegert, School Success Program Coordinator

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 12th 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Success are referred to the program due to academic need, poor attendance, aggressive behavior, crisis situations, withdrawn behavior, or being untended.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 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.

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, 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 School Success, 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.

School Success has become an integral resource for students, families, and schools in Northeast Michigan. As of the 2014-2015 Academic Year, School Success 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 the School Success Program, showed that approximately 62% of students participating in School Success 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. 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 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 currently includes Crawford, Ogemaw and Roscommon Counties. This expansion successfully totals the School Success Program presence in 28 public school locations, 11 counties and 29 School Success Liaisons, 1 Area Manager, 1 Coordinator and 1 Director. The School Success evaluation showed that approximately 84% of students participating in the School Success Program demonstrated academic improvement and 87% of parents participated in school related activities that directly supported their child's academics.

b. Report Purpose

The purpose of this report is to assess the current School Success Partnership Program and its expansion during the 2015-2016 Academic Year. The State of Michigan allocated \$450,000, 29% of the School Success Program's \$1.6 million annual budget, to support existing programming and expansion efforts. This nine-month report intends to (1) document the support of existing schools with a School Success presence and expansion of the School Success Program into three 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 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 School Success Program data from September 2015 through May 2016.

II. Methodology

a. Data Collection

Data collection for the progress report was conducted through initial intake reports, exit reports, and monthly case reports completed by the School Success Liaisons utilizing a web-based service (Formstack).

The outcomes reported used School Success Liaison data collected between September 2015 through May 2016 including; monthly data reports, initial intake and exit reports and Results-oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) reports. School Success 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.

School Success administrators then compiled and analyzed all the data. 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 and support of all 4 Performance Objectives.

III. Results

a. Expansion of the School Success Partnership Program

The School Success Partnership Program has expanded the program into three (3) new counties within Northeast Michigan: Crawford, Ogemaw and Roscommon. School Success implemented its program in four (4) sites within the three (3) county expansion area as well as one (1) new site in an existing county

between September 2015 and December 2015. As of May 2016, School Success served 694 students, 114 of whom attended one of the expansion sites (see Figure 1/Table 1).

Figure 1. School Success Existing and Expansion Sites: 2015-2016

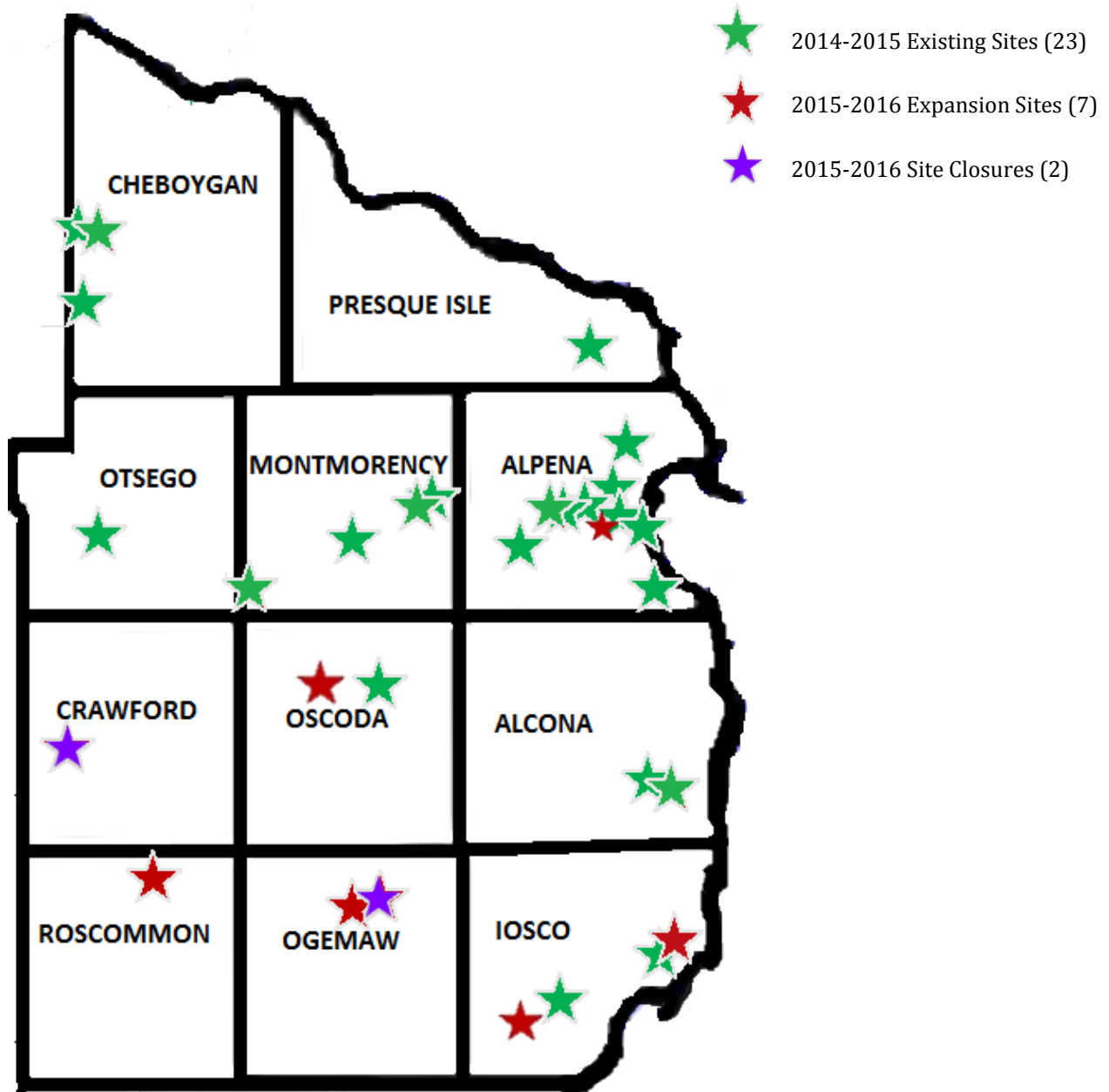


Table 1. School Success Partnership Program Sites: September - December 2015					
County	School Name	Number of Students in the School	Number of Students in School Success	Date Became School Success Site	Date Site Closed
Alpena	Alpena High School	364	28	--	
	Besser Elementary	426	23	--	
	Ella White Elementary	471	35	--	
	Hinks Elementary	161	16	--	
	Lincoln Elementary	175	25	--	
	Sanborn Elementary	179	24	--	
	Thunder Bay Jr. High	885	48	--	
	Wilson Elementary	224	25	--	
Cheboygan	Inland Lakes Elementary	314	40	--	
	Inland Lakes Schools	439	25	--	
	Wolverine Schools	280	22	--	
Montmorency	Atlanta Schools	258	30	--	
	Hillman Elementary	249	36	--	
	Hillman Jr/Sr High	226	21	--	
	Lewiston Elementary	177	28	--	
Otsego	Johannesburg Middle School	306	19	--	
Expansion Sites 2014-2015					
Alcona	Alcona Elementary	372	18	9/2/2014	
	Alcona Jr/Sr High	370	26	9/2/2014	
Iosco	Hale Schools	240	16	9/2/2014	
	Richardson Elementary School	654	34	11/3/2014	
Oscoda	Fairview Schools	304	24	12/1/2014	
Presque Isle	Posen Schools	235	19	9/2/2014	
Expansion Sites 2015-2016					
Crawford	Grayling Elementary/Jr High	1041	4	8/31/2015	10/1/2015
Iosco	Oscoda High School	541	23	8/31/2015	
Ogemaw	Surline Elementary/Jr High	971	21	8/31/2015	
	Ogemaw Heights Jr/Sr High	923	23	8/31/2015	2/25/2016
Roscommon	Roscommon Middle School	329	20	8/31/2015	
Iosco	Whittemore-Prescott Elem.	326	23	1/25/2016	
Oscoda	Mio AuSable Elementary	222	n/a	4/25/2016	

i. Identifying and Collaborating with Expansion Sites

In order to meet the goals of expanding into the last three counties of Prosperity Region Three, School Success Administrators reached out to superintendents, principals and school boards, giving them an overview of the School Success Program and its successful impact on student improvement. During this current year, two of the program expansion sites (Ogemaw High School and Grayling Elementary) closed due to staff not being a good fit for the school site. However, School Success administrators knew there were other schools wanting, and had a need for, the School Success Program to be implemented in their building. Therefore, Whittemore Prescott and Mio Elementary were selected and opened mid-year (see Table 1.) The state funding that was being used for the closure sites continued to be used to support already existing sites.

Once the three (3) counties and five (5) expansion sites were identified, School Success continued reaching out to teachers and staff, as well as parents, to inform them about the program and its services. School Success administrators began introducing the program to teachers and staff in multiple venues. Parents were informed via School Open Houses held prior to the first day of school, Parent Teacher Organization meetings, school newsletters, and newspaper articles.

ii. Hiring and Training Additional School Success Workers

The School Success Program expansion resulted in the hiring of five (5) new School Success Liaisons. This included five (5) full-time, part-year School Success Liaisons recruited through advertisements in local newspapers, on the NEMCSA website and by word of mouth. The positions required, at minimum, a Bachelor's degree in a human service field. Experience with at-risk populations was preferred. School Success program administrators also looked for individuals knowledgeable about and invested in their communities. Newly identified partner schools assisted with the interview process.

In preparation for the expansion, School Success administrators described making substantial changes to their employee training process. School Success administrators and liaisons collaboratively developed a formal employee handbook, which became the basis for a full-day training, and initiated a mentorship program to assist and support new workers. All newly hired School Success Liaisons were paired with a mentor, who was an experienced School Success Liaison. Before serving students, new School Success employees shadowed their mentors, and once new School Success Liaisons started serving students,

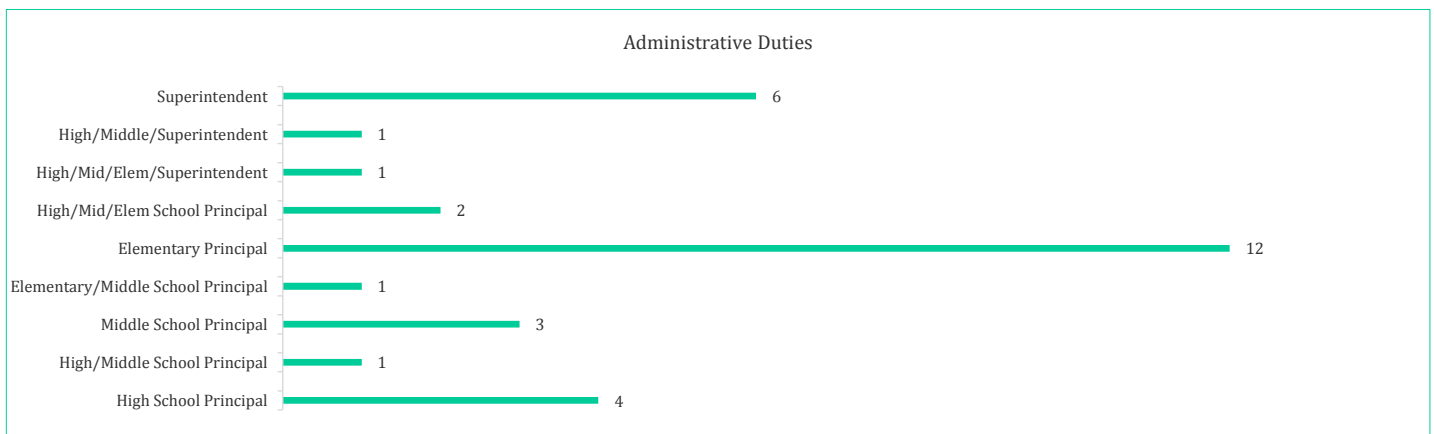
mentors went on periodic site visits to provide guidance and ensure the program was implemented as intended. School Success Liaisons also received the standard new employee training from NEMCSA, including workplace violence training, as well as standard training on School Success Program requirements. On-going training and support is provided to School Success Liaisons through monthly staff meetings, job-specific conferences and mentorships.

iii. Principal Survey Results

This section of the report presents results of the survey administered to Principals and Superintendents in April 2016.

Sample Characteristics

Of the 34 surveys sent out, 31 surveys (91%) were completed by principals and superintendents. Respondents most frequently identified their administrative duties as:



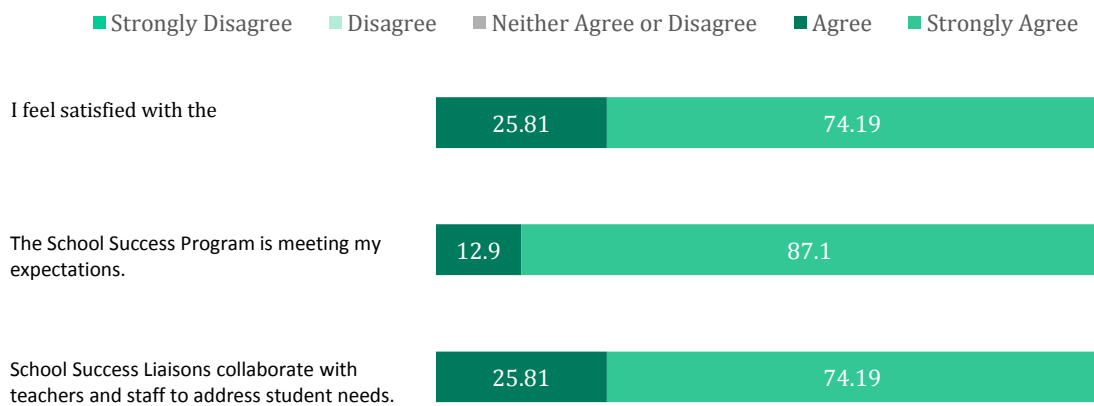
Implementation of the School Success Partnership Program

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 liaisons, teachers, and staff. Principals were also asked whether they would recommend the School Success Program to colleagues at other schools.

Principals reported a high level of satisfactions with the implementation of the School Success Partnership Program at their schools. In fact, **100% of principals and superintendents (N=31) strongly agreed or agreed that they felt satisfied with the implementation of School Success. Similarly, 100% of principals and superintendents who responded (N=31) strongly agreed or agreed that the School Success Program was meeting their expectations.**

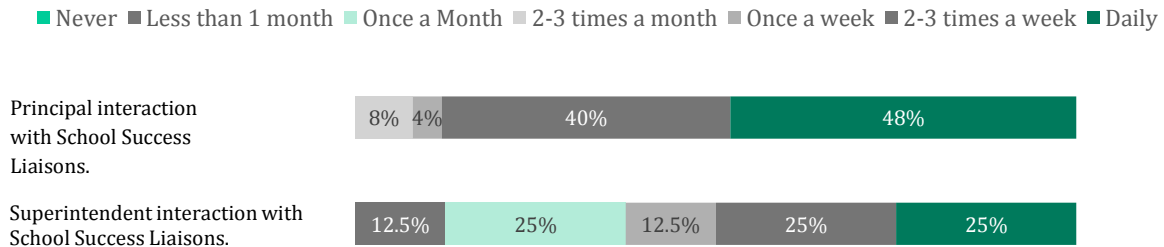
“THE STRENGTH OF THE SCHOOL-HOME connection is fantastic. School Success, is by far, the most impactful program offered in the school setting.”

Principals and superintendents also overwhelmingly endorsed collaboration between School Success Liaisons, teachers, and staff, with **100% of administrators reporting that they strongly agreed or agreed that School Success Liaisons collaborate with teachers and staff to address student needs.** Principals and superintendents rated their level of agreement on a five point scale that ranged from zero (0) strongly disagree to five (5) strongly agree.



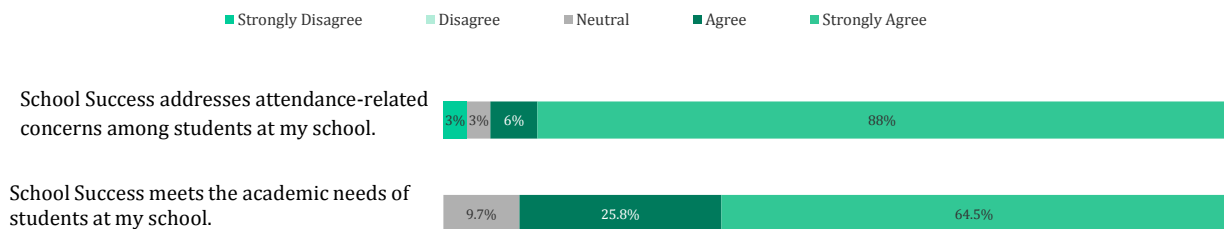
Principals and superintendents were also asked about the frequency of their own interactions with School Success Liaisons. Both principals and superintendents alike rated the frequency of their interactions on a seven point scale that ranged from zero (0) never to seven (daily).

Forty-eight percent (48%) of principals reported *daily* personal interaction with the School Success Liaison in their building with twenty-five percent (25%) of superintendents (N=6) reporting *daily* interaction with School Success Liaisons.



Perceived Impact of School Success Partnership Program on Students Served

Principals and superintendents were also asked about the impact of the School Success Partnership Program on students receiving services at their schools. Specifically, school administrators were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements asking if the School Success Program addressed attendance-related concerns and met the academic needs of their students. Principals rated their level of agreement on a five point scale that ranged from zero (0) strongly disagree to five (5) strongly agree.



Principals and superintendents overwhelmingly indicated that School Success positively impacted attendance-related concerns among students at their school, **with 94% of respondents reporting that they strongly agreed or agreed that School success addresses attendance-related concerns.** One superintendent chose to remain neutral and one principal strongly disagreed. This disagreement was due to the unsatisfactory performance of the School Success Liaison who was eventually terminated from the program in February for unsatisfactory performance.

Responses also indicate that School Success addresses students' academic needs, as **nearly 91% of principals and superintendents strongly agreed or agreed that the program meets the academic needs of students at their schools.**

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 and superintendents were asked whether they would recommend the School Success Program to a colleague at another school, and why or why not.

Program Strengths

Principals and superintendents identified three core strengths of the School Success Partnership Program, including improved engagement with at-risk students and families; the



***“THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL
and home—increased interactions with parents”***

cohesive integration of School Success Liaisons within their school; and the quality of training and services being provided to students, families and schools.

Improved Engagement with At-Risk Students and Families

Principals and superintendents 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 Liaisons act as a link between families and 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 *“fit in with our staff and works collaboratively with them to meet the needs of our students. She has been a liaison between home and school...”* Another principal shared that the School Success Liaison is *“available for the students, staff, and administration and works collaboratively with us to help the students. She is a key piece to our success.”* 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

“THE SKILL AND CHARACTER OF THE INDIVIDUAL success workers is paramount to their value to the schools. Credit is due to the supervision and hiring of these workers, we have been very fortunate.”

knowledge and resources to provide appropriate referrals. As a principal shared, “...*School Success addresses the fact that at-risk students need a strong social support system if they are going to experience academic success. The assumption that all students come to school with the necessary skills to succeed is not true. The interventions for students that School Success provides are making a difference and allowing students to achieve at a higher level over time.*”

Cohesive Integration of School Success Liaisons within the School Setting

School Administrators also identified the cohesive integration of School Success Liaisons with the school setting as a program strength. This is exemplified by one principal who explained, “...*has made herself a valuable part of our team and created a highly regarded reputation with our community.*” Another principal noted the impact of having a School Success Liaison in the building, stating, “...*attention to student’s individual needs is crucial and has dramatically changed our school culture.*” 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. A principal shared that the School Success Liaison at his/her school, “...*has taken a leader role and has brought numerous programs/services to the teachers...(and) has implemented many new initiatives, most of which have been enthusiastically embraced by staff.*”

Quality of Training and Services Provided to Students, Families and Schools.

Finally, principals and superintendents feel that their schools would not have the capacity to address the needs of at-risk student without the School Success Partnership Program. Specifically, administrators believe that the quality of training and services being provided has been critical to student success. This is explicitly stated by one principal, who shared, *“Their training in social work is exactly what we need and their ability to connect families with their needs is tremendous.”* Another principal noted, *“...expertise, compassion, and work ethic have helped our school with behavior, attendance, and academic issues.”* Other principals also shared the same sentiments by describing School Success Liaisons as “professional”, “dynamic”, and, most notably, “...self-starters, enthusiastic and very committed to their jobs”.

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 and superintendents identified the need for more School Success Liaisons 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 and superintendents reported that they would like to have more School Success Liaisons serving in their schools. As these administrators clearly stated, *“...we could simply use this position in every building rather than one in the district”* and *“a second person”* were common themes.

“THE SCHOOL SUCCESS PROGRAM IS A QUINTESSENTIAL part of the daily function of our elementary school. Our School Success Liaison, in collaboration with our staff, works diligently to remove any barriers a student might have in order to help our at-risk students achieve success both emotionally and academically. This program has also increased parent involvement within our school and out in our community. My sincere thanks to the School Success Program and all of their hard work!”

Funding Constraints

Funding constraints, and the need for increased funding for the School Success Program were identified by principals and superintendents as areas for improvement. Administrators perceived a direct connection between funding constraints and the staffing constraints, described above, with two principals noting, *“The School Success Program brings a depth of services to our school that we just would not be able to have without it. As you know, funding is difficult, and in difficult times, the ‘extra’ programs are cut first. If we did not have SSP (School Success Program), we would not have nearly the number of supports for our academically struggling or emotionally needy students and their families”* and *“we are always short the resources we need to provide for the students...Without this program, many of our at-risk and high needs kids would not be as successful as they are. This program and funding is critical for many of our students.”* Another administrator felt

“WE NEED MORE OF YOU! YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE!”

the lack of funding was not inherent within the School Success Program but, *“If there is a weakness...it is not with School Success. The struggle is that the number of students and their families that need support is far greater than our social system is prepared to deal with. Mental health, the courts, health care, and family services are areas that are limited in resources. Identifying the needs is not difficult. Providing the help to students is limited as social supports diminish.”*

It is important to note that of the 31 respondents to the question regarding areas of improvement, only 35% (N=11) entered any type of response with the remainder of respondents with either no entry or “nothing needs improving”.

Recommending School Success Program to Colleagues

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

ALL administrators responding to this question (100%; N=31) reported that they would recommend the School Success Program to their colleagues at other schools.

When asked why they would recommend the program, principals and superintendents 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, *“This program makes a difference with behavioral, attendance, and academic issues throughout our school. The depth of knowledge offered by our School Success Liaison is remarkable.”*

100 %
**OF PRINCIPALS AND SUPERINTENDENTS
WOULD RECOMMEND THE SCHOOL
SUCCESS PROGRAM TO COLLEAGUES IN
OTHER SCHOOLS.**

In a similar vein, two other principals stated, *“Our students are achieving in part to the services they receive from School Success”* and *“This program is helping students that would normally get over-looked or fall through the cracks and possibly drop out of school.”*

Principals also brought up the cost-effective nature of the School Success Program, as exemplified by these principals who explained, *“This is an amazing resource and it is extremely cost effective for the school”* and *“If the school does not already have someone implementing at-risk preventions and coordinating resources for families, this is a successful economic solution to fill the gap.”*

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, *“...has such a positive impact on the entire dynamic of our school. The loss of our school success person would be a very large setback for us.”* Another explained, *“Definitely an asset in our work on truancy and addressing the effects of poverty on school performance.”*

Another principal reiterated the fact that without School Success, many of these students and families’

“MY HOPE WOULD BE THAT EVENTUALLY,
every school in the State Of Michigan would have an opportunity (to) reap the insurmountable benefits of the school success program.”

needs would go un-addressed, explaining, *“This program is helping students that would normally get over-looked or fall through the cracks and possibly drop out of school.”*

iv. Parent Survey Results

Findings from parent surveys completed by parents participating in the School Success Program were collected through a web-based data collection service (Formstack).

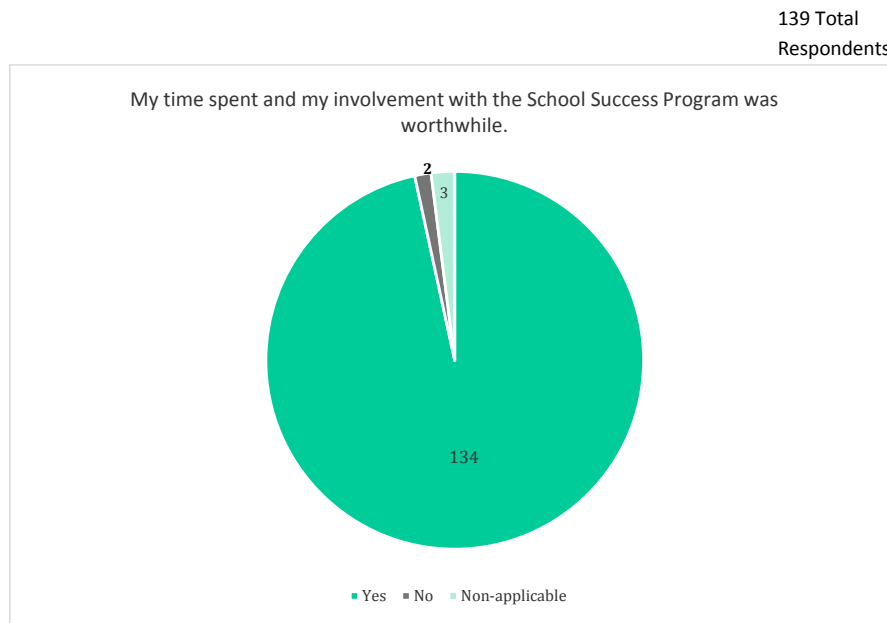
Sample Characteristics

Randomly selected parents responding to this survey represented children and families served in 10 of the 11 counties where School Success has been implemented.

Parent Involvement with the School Success Partnership Program Worthwhile

On average, parents reported their involvement and time spent with the School Success Program as being worthwhile. A little more than 96% (N=134; 96.4%) of parents indicated that they felt their involvement and time spent with the School Success Program was worthwhile.

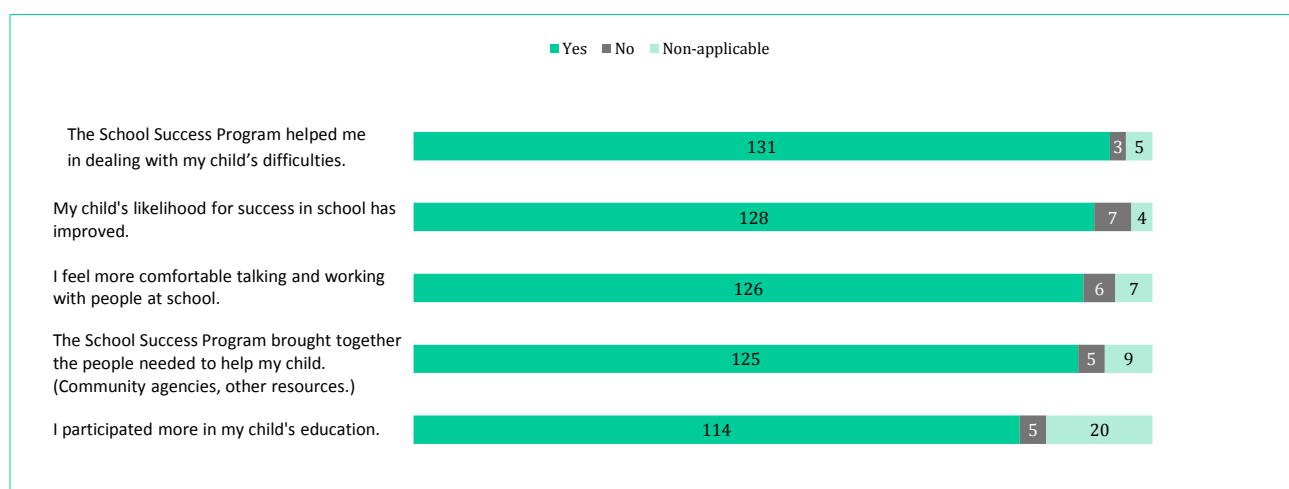
It should be noted that some students and families automatically receive services because of truancy-related issues. It is likely that these families may be less inclined to acknowledge their time and involvement with the program as being worthwhile.



Parent Perceptions of the School Success Program

This section of the report focuses on parent perceptions of the School Success Program, as assessed via specific survey questions, as well as an open-ended survey question. Parent perception questions related to survey questions asking; whether the program helped in dealing with their child's difficulties, the likelihood that their child's success in school has improved, parent is more comfortable talking with people at school, the program brought together the necessary people to help their child succeed, whether parent participated more in their child's education and would the parent recommend the program to family, friends or coworkers. One open-ended question was asked of all respondents regarding what improvements could be made to the program along with space for parents to add any additional comments about the program that may not have been covered in the survey questions.

Findings related to the survey questions provide School Success administrators and stakeholders important insight into parent perceptions of the program, facilitators and barriers.



Of the 139 parents who responded to perception survey questions, slightly more than 94% (N=131; 94.2%) felt that the School Success Program helped them deal with their child's difficulties while 2% (N=3) felt the program did not help them and 4% (N=5) felt the question did not apply to them. Equally, 92% (N=128) of parents felt that the School Success Program improved their child's likelihood for success in school and 91% (N=126) of parents responded that they felt more comfortable talking and working with people at school. Nearly 90% (N=125) of parents also responded positively

to the School Success Program's ability to bring together people needed to help their child, specifically community resources or interventions. Although, 82% (N=114) of parents felt they participated more in their child's education, slightly more than 14% (N=20; 14.4%) responded that this question did not apply to them and a mere 3.5% (N=5) felt that they did not participate more in their child's education. Again, it's important to note that of those parents who responded that they did not participate more in their child's education, included those parents who were already highly involved and could not be *more* involved as they were already at the peak of involvement.

Program Strengths

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

Academic Support

Parents overwhelmingly identified the academic support provided by School Success Liaisons as helping

"MY CHILD DOES SO MUCH BETTER WHEN HE HAS (SCHOOL SUCCESS LIAISON) TO WORK WITH. HE IS ABLE TO GET HIS WORK DONE ON TIME AND IF HE DOES GET BEHIND, I AM NOTIFIED RIGHT AWAY. HE WAS ABLE TO GET ON THE HONOR ROLL FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME."

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, *"This program has helped my son do better in school because he got the confidence he needs to get his work done and learn he's not alone in his struggles"*, while another parent shared *"This program helped my son pay a little more attention to his grades and helped him to take charge of his own success in high school."* The impact that the School Success

Program has on addressing attendance-related issues was noted by parent as well, with this parent stating, *"My son was skipping school a lot at the beginning of the year. (Name of School Success Liaison) stepped in right away and his attendance improved as well as his grades."* This sentiment was echoed by another parent who stated, *"The program has helped my son. He is not missing school and is passing his classes."*

Parents also discussed how the School Success Program helped them to engage and support their children. As this parent noted, *“I believe it is an awesome program, especially for busy parents that are concerned about their children’s education, but may not have the time to communicate with teachers directly,”* while another parent commented, *“The communication was amazing along with all of the options we were given to help our child.”* Many parents believed that their children’s academic progress would not have occurred without the services they receive from School Success. One grandparent explained, *“Please ensure this valuable resource for student success remains available. My granddaughter would be failing without it.”*

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 addressing their children’s behavioral issues, one parent explained that, *“The help and information that I have received has truly helped me understand my son more and better help him with things in life that seem to get the best of us. It’s been a great learning experience and I think any parent struggling should consider the program.”* Parents often provided specific examples of behavioral issues addressed by School Success. For example, this parent shared that the program *“helped change his behavior and increased his self-esteem.”* Similarly, another parent noted, *“School Success has helped my daughter and me adjust to behaviors and how to deal with situations.”*

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, *“It has helped us at the school to have someone to talk to and have help when our child is having a meltdown.”* Another parent shared, *“Both of my children improved in behaviors through developed plans with the school success worker, both at school and home.”*

“THE SCHOOL SUCCESS PROGRAM MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN MY CHILD BEING ABLE TO STAY IN SCHOOL AND RECEIVE THE HELP WE NEEDED.”

Assistance with Crisis Situation

Finally, parents reported that School Success helped their children and families get through times of crisis. A variety of crisis situations were discussed, including bullying, homelessness and hunger. This parent explained, *“(School Success) did an excellent job helping my family through a very*

difficult time for my family. Her caring attitude and willingness to go about and beyond really made a difference for our family.” Similarly, another parent shared, *“My son’s dad’s house burnt to the ground and they all lost everything and the school success worker was amazing in every way, trying to help wherever she could”,* while another parent stated, *“(School Success) was very proactive and sincere. She really helped work out the problems my daughter was having with bullying and her transition to a new school.”* Other parents shared that School Success offered assistance with securing basic needs. One parent explained, School Success *“helps find food when we need it,”* while another noted, *“She (School Success) helps me with my son, food, clothing and budgeting.”*

“(SCHOOL SUCCESS) HELPED ME GET INTO AN

apartment of my own...I am now working, have a safe home for my children, and we are beginning to heal. (School Success) has been there every step of the way. She has brought me a food package and delivered it to my upstairs apartment when I was not feeling well, she has gone with me as a support person to my court dates, she has always been there to offer encouragement and understanding when I felt down.”

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 school success liaisons. There truly is a need for them in the school system.”* 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 one on one for kids that are having issues with school work and dealing with teachers that don’t understand ADHD kids and how their brain processes things in life,”* and another noted, *“If possible more updates on both improvements and difficulties.”* Parents also expressed a desire for “summer services” as noted by one parent, *“I wish I could get help in the summer. My troubles don’t go away when school is over.”* Several parents shared frustrations with the school systems approach to working with their children as evidenced by one parent’s comment, *“It isn’t the school success*

worker, she is awesome, it is the (school name) teachers, making it difficult for the student to go down and get help. When there is more than enough proof that the school success worker is doing a great job!!” In a similar vein, another parent noted, “I think the other staff in the school need to be more cooperative with the school success program and work more together. I feel like sometimes she has to tackle stuff on her own when other (school) staff members need to help back her up.”

“AS A FOSTER PARENT, THIS PROGRAM HAS BEEN
our saving grace. Our school success worker is amazing. We feel very comfortable going to her with issues or questions we have regarding our kids. It helps with the kids who are going through certain situations at home to have someone at school they can go to for support and encouragement. I cannot say enough positive about this program. I would be lost without our success worker.”

Recommending the School Success Program to Family, Friends and Coworkers

Overwhelmingly, almost 96% (N=133) of parents responded that they would recommend the program to their family, friends and coworkers.

When asked why they would recommend School Success to a friend, parent discussed the positive impact that the program had on their children. As stated by one parent, “Overall, this is a good program and provides the extra assistance that some kids need.” Another parent shared, “I really like that both school and parents can work together.”

v. Strengths of Expansion Effort

Administrators spent a substantial amount of time learning about communities before implementing their program in new sites, which helped create new partnerships and successful transitions into new schools. In fact, the Program Director hired an Area Manager and Coordinator to do substantial research on each new county and presented this research to superintendents in those counties as well as to state leaders such as Mr. Tim Becker (Chief Deputy Director DHHS) and Mr. Steve Yager (Executive Director, Children’s Services Agency, DHHS) and Ms. Carole Viventi, Director of Special Projects, Director’s Office.

Additionally, School Success administrators recognize the program’s local reputation as being an important strength of the expansion. Given that School Success is well known in the community and has

been shown to improve outcomes for the students and families served, many schools and districts were eager to partner with the program and provide a proven, needed service to their students. Rural communities in Michigan have limited access to services and to dollars for those services, so being able to implement a known commodity with a track record of success was important for the new service sites.

The School Success Program was developed in the rural context, and is therefore responsive to unique needs of communities in rural Michigan. Particularly, School Success provides services to students and families primarily at school, with home visits as needed. Therefore, the School Success Program 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, School Success does not utilize income-based eligibility criteria. This lessens stigma among rural populations that place high value on independence and self-reliance.

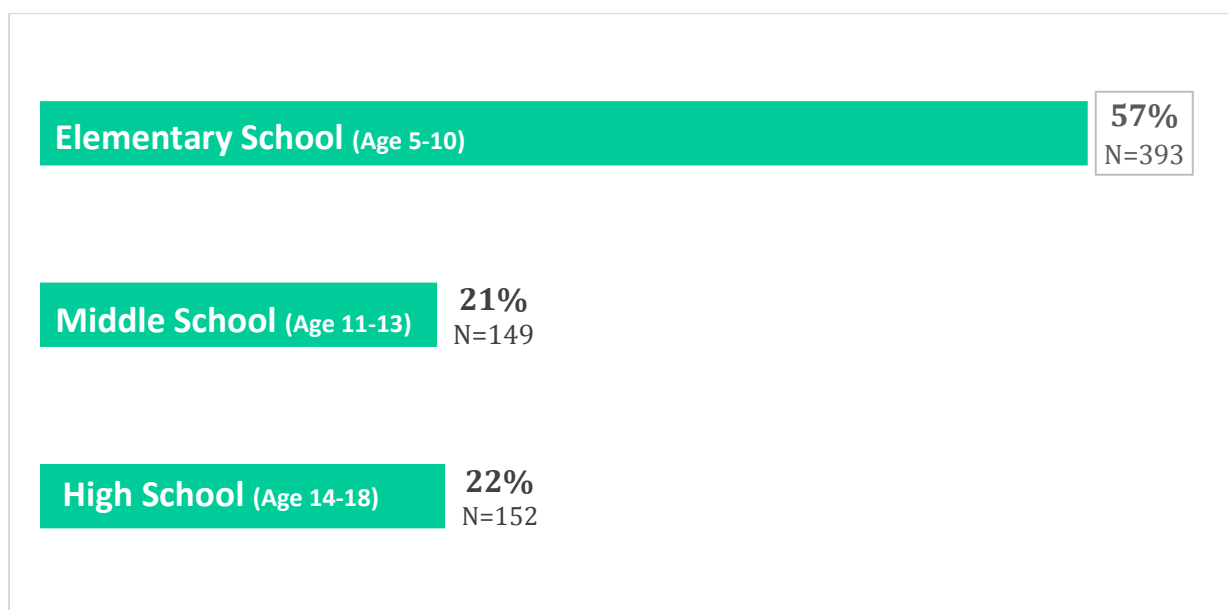
Finally, another positive impact of the School Success Program is its presence in all 11 counties of Prosperity Region 3. For those families who are more transient, moving from one school to the next or one county to the next, accessing the program or continuing School Success services means students can continue to succeed no matter where they live. School Success Liaisons are able to transfer student case files and information to each other thereby eliminating communication barriers between schools. This continuity of services and lifeline between School Success Liaisons creates a stronger program and smoother transition for students and families as they move.

a. Students Served

i. Student Characteristics

As previously stated, between September 2015 and May 2016, the School Success Program has served 694 students on a formal caseload basis and served 1996 students informally across 28 schools within eleven counties. More than half of the students served (N=393; 57%) by School Success are in elementary school, while almost 22% (N=152) are in high school. Slightly more than 21% of students served are in middle school (N=149); see Figure 2. The majority of students served by School Success are male (58.9%).

Figure 2. School Success Students by Age



Though the School Success Program does not have income-based eligibility criteria, 78.8% of students served are eligible for free and reduced lunch. In the State of Michigan, 46.7% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch (Michigan Department of Education, 2014), suggesting a substantially higher proportion of students served by the School Success Program are economically disadvantaged when compared to students across the state.

ii. Reason for Referral

Almost two-thirds (64.1%; N=445) of the students who entered the School Success Program between September 2015 and May 2016 were referred for services by their teachers (41.3%; N=287) or parents (22.2%; N=158). School Success Liaisons and other community partners, including probation officers, school counselors, family members other than parents, and school secretaries were responsible for slightly over 23% of referrals. School principals and counselors referred the balance of the student participants which was nearly 13% of students. See Table 4.

Table 4. School Success Partnership Program Referral Sources (N=694)		
Referral Source	Total	
	N	%
Teacher	287	41.3%
School Success Worker/Other Partners	161	23.2%
Parent	158	22.8%
Principal	61	8.8%
Counselor	27	3.9%

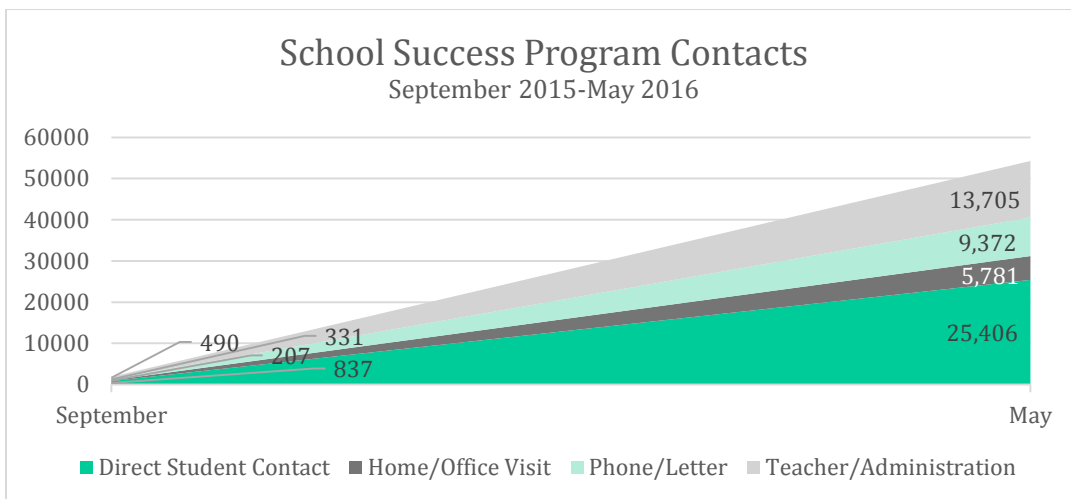
This academic year to date, students were most commonly referred to School Success for academic concerns (N=413), followed by attendance (N=193), crisis (N=190), and aggressive behavior (N=161). Twice as many students were referred due to withdrawn behavior (N=126) than for students were referred as untended (N=61) or other (N=41). It is important to note that students were referred to the School Success Program for more than one reason, therefore, the Reasons for Referral will total far more than the number of students served (N=694). See Table 5.

Table 5. School Success Partnership Program Reasons for Referral	
Reasons for Referral	Total
	N
Academic Concerns	413
Attendance Concerns	193
Crisis	190
Aggressive Behavior	161
Withdrawn	126
Untended	61

iii. Contacts

From September to May 2016, School Success Liaisons had 54,264 contacts related to students they serve. See Figure 3. Almost half of these contacts (N=25,406) were direct, school-based interactions, in which the School Success Liaison met with the student at school to achieve Action Plan goals. Parents and/or guardians meeting with the School Success Liaison made up nearly 11% (N=5,781) of the School Success contacts. Slightly more than 17% of School Success contacts (N=9,372) consisted of phone calls and letters related to the case. These calls and letters were direct contacts with parents and sometimes consisted of emails, text messages, and other forms of social media. Contacts with teachers and administrators comprised 25% (N=13,705) of related student case interactions. See Figure 3.

Figure 3. School Success Program Contacts: September 2015-May 2016



b. Performance Objectives

i. Increasing School Attendance and Decreasing Chronic Absenteeism

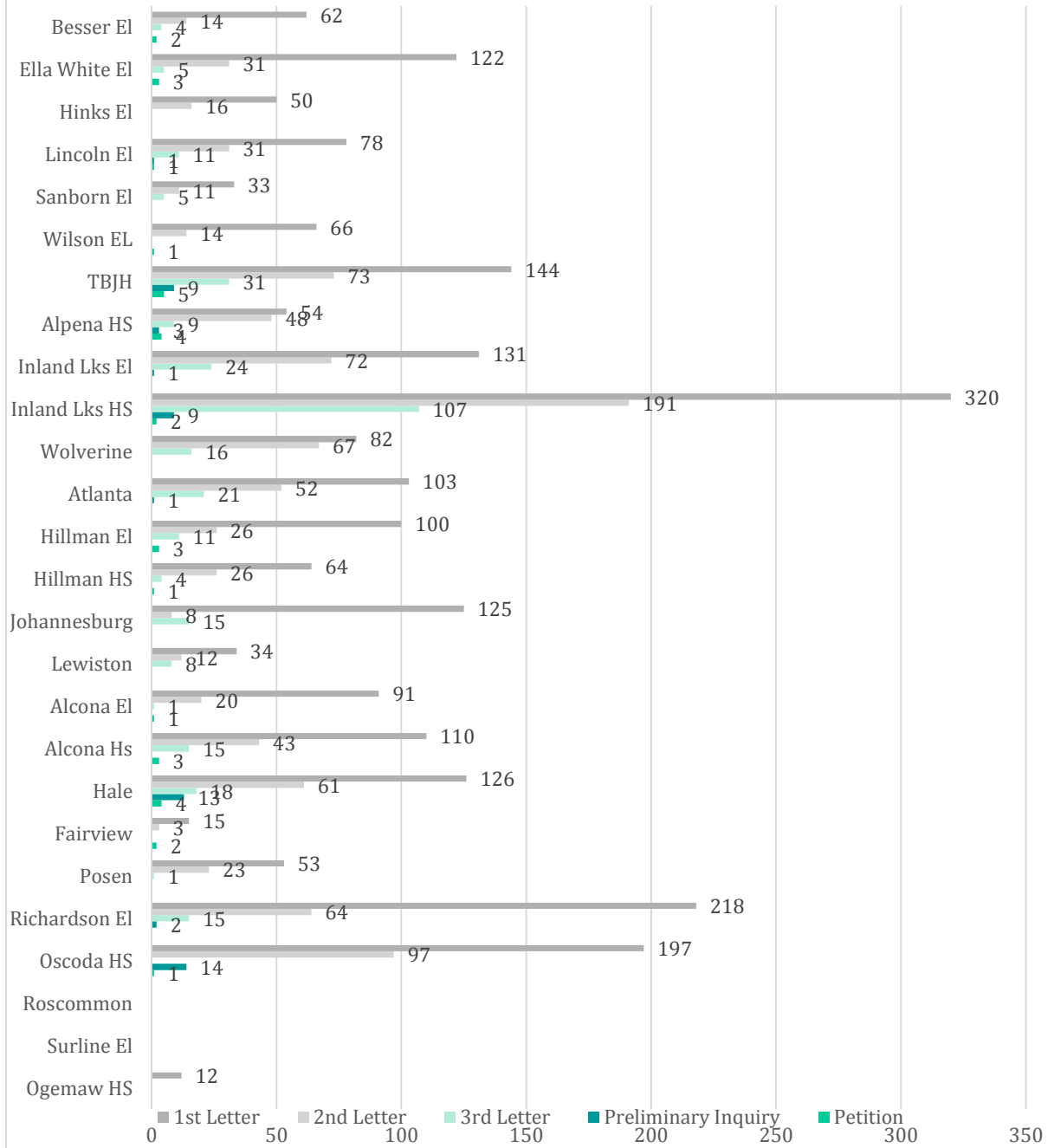
School Success believes that consistent school attendance is the single most important factor in making sure a child receives the best education possible. Since its inception, the School Success Program has

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, the School Success Program has developed and implemented a process to address this concern.

School Success 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 2015 through May 2016, 2,390 first letters were sent to parents indicating an attendance concern. With contact and interventions from the School Success Liaison 1,003 second letters were sent and of those only 321 third letters were needed – an 87% decrease of students with truancy concerns. With continued interventions, only 53 Preliminary Inquiries were held resulting in a 98% decrease in the number of students identified with truancy concerns. Of those 53, only 33 students required petitions to the court system formally for truancy – a 98.7% improvement in those originally identified as truant.

Attendance Letter Data



It is a protocol that works and is based on building relationships between the school and home and not on punitive measures.

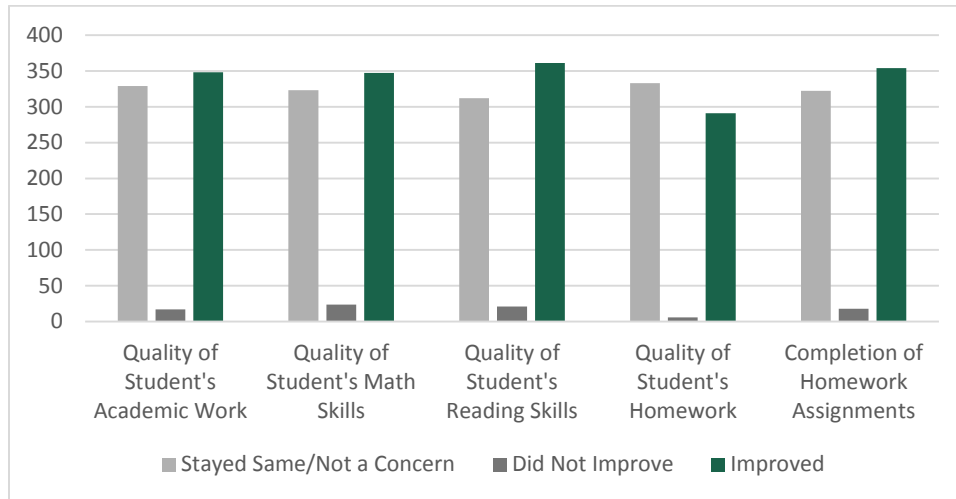
Of the 694 formal School Success cases, 193 had attendance related referrals. Of these referrals, 140 were identified as having an attendance concern along with other referral reasons and 53 referrals were for attendance concerns alone.

In conjunction with monitoring student attendance, as part of the monthly reporting process to School Success administrators, School Success Liaisons were also asked to report on increased student attendance in class. Of the 694 students in the School Success Program, 40% (N=278) of students stayed in class more often, 46% (N=319) students were not a concern. Ensuring that students stay in class more often is just as important as having regular school attendance. School Success 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 suggest that of the 694 formal cases closed to date, 50% (N=348) of School Success students demonstrated an improvement in the overall quality of their academic work with 47% (N=329) either staying the same or not a concern and only seventeen 3% (N=17) students not improving between September 2015 and May 2016. Additionally, 50% (N=347) of School Success students improved the quality of their math skills, 47% (N=323) stayed the same or were not a concern and 3% (N=24) students did not improve. Quality of student reading skills improved by 52% (N=361) with 45% (N=312) of students staying the same or not a concern and 3% (N=21) students showing no improvement. Furthermore, completion of homework assignments improved by 51% (N=354) and quality of homework completed improved by 42% (N=291). It is also important to note that a little better than 76% (N=527), received some type of School Success Liaison help with school work See Figure 4.

Figure 4. Academic Performance: September 2015 – May 2016



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

Each month, School Success 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 School Success. This school year was no exception. Academic issues along with the virtual tie between attendance and crisis issues, the top three reasons for referral to the program, emerged as barriers to student success as well.

Once School Success 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. For example, one School Success Liaison reported, *"Student is learning new coping methods to understand how to deescalate his anxiety. He is able to come see SSW during anxiety attacks and he is learning how to deescalate. With learning these new methods - he is able to not only use these at school but the parents have been able to tell the difference at home as well. At the beginning of the year it was difficult to integrate*

him back into his class but now he is able to go back to class within a very short amount of time. Student has had a history of poor attendance and academics because of his anxiety. He was referred to SSW to help create new working habits and to create a soft place to land. He was able to keep his attendance consistent and his academics high.”

Another School Success Liaison stated, “Cadence's mother has been in and out of jail all year and dad has been too scared to file custody. He lacks a support system, lost his job during the spring months and is struggling to find his way in the community. After many months of offering to assist in this direction, he reached out to me to get direction on filing for full custody and transferring downstate to reside where his mother and aunt are. This is going to offer Cadence more support, resources and the maternal connection that she has been looking for.”

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 School Success Liaisons to offer important guidance and information. Additionally, School Success 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, School Success Liaisons provide referrals to help students and families resolve identified barriers that are beyond the scope of the School Success Program. See Table 6.

Table 6. School Success Referrals/Contacts: Connecting Students and Families to Community Resources September 2015 – May 2016	
Referral Type	Total
	N
ESD/ISD	410
Private Practitioner/Counselor	343
DHHS	288
Community Mental Health	213
School-based Health Clinic	183
NEMCSA	111

Homeless Services (FIT)	85
Family Court	83
Mentoring Programs	73
Child and Family Services	64
Employment Services	40
Salvation Army	38
Shelter Services	18
Substance Abuse Services	6
Other (food pantries, state and local police, giving programs, etc.)	510
Total Referrals	2,465

Providing referrals and connecting students and families to needed community resources represents an integral part of the School Success Program. In fact, from September 2015 to May 2016, School Success Liaisons reported making 2,465 either referrals and/or direct contacts to community resources. While School Success connects with a wide range of community resources, as summarized in Table 6 above, School Success students were most commonly referred to and/or liaisons directly connected with Education Services (N=410), followed by Private Practitioners/Counselors (N=343) and the Department of Health and Human Services (N=288). This may reflect the barriers related to mental health, learning disability-related issues, 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

School Success Liaisons reported engaging with parents 15,153 times from September 2015 through May 2016 through home visits, office visits, phone calls, letters and school meetings. Most commonly, School Success 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. School Success 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, School Success helps to increase parental involvement.

Additionally, many liaisons 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 Liaisons also documented that parents increased their involvement with their children and other family members by attempting to better understand their perspectives. Liaisons 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.

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. The School Success Program 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. The School Success Program has met or exceeded their performance targets (within the range of +/- 10%) for every year in the program's history. Some programs collect data quarterly to assist in the annual roll-up. Because School Success is a school-year based program, they have set their quarters to be September- November; December-February; and March-May.

Documentation from the yearly ROMA report (September 2015-May 2016) indicates the School Success Program exceeded our projected number of students by 47 students (+7%) Because of this, 107% of projected referrals resulted in parents identifying family needs, developing an action plan and agreeing to this plan in conjunction with the School Success Liaison, 97% of parents advocated for their child in at least one school meeting and 91% of parents participated in an initial home visit. The remaining parents, though not participating in a home visit due to multiple reasons (homeless, inability due to work schedule, etc) did come to the school for office visits with the Liaison with a result of 100% parent participation in a home visit and/or office visit with the School Success Liaison.

In order to determine the extent of the parental engagement by families participating in the School Success Program, School Success 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 694 students/families participating in the School Success Program, slightly more than 96% (N=668) of parents participated in a home/ office visit. In addition, 78% (N= 544) attended parent/teacher conferences, slightly more than 35% (N=243) attended a holiday dinner or program, and slightly less than 47% (N=325) met with the principal or teacher to address student concerns. Other (N=131) school activities were defined as participation in classroom activities, dropping off homework/medication, transportation, school sporting events, etc. This engagement directly demonstrates an increase in parental involvement with their children and school. See Table 7.

Table 7. Parent Participated in at least one of the following:	
School Activity	Total
	N
Home Visit/Office Visit	697
P/T Conferences	631
Holiday Dinner/Program	243
Principal/Teacher Mtg.	325
Signed Planner 50%	225
Attendance Mtg.	186
Signed Reading Log 50%	273
504/IEP Mtg.	68
Field Trip	39
PAC/Parent Forum Mtg.	13
Other	131

Further, data indicates that 39% (N=273) and 32% (N=225) of families were consistent in signing reading logs and academic planners respectively. Also, nearly 10% (N=68) participated in a 504 or IEP meeting to support their child's learning. Given that parental involvement tremendously increases the likelihood for student success, encouraging parents to get involved is a key component of the School Success Program model.

III. Discussion

The School Success Program initiated a large scale expansion effort, almost tripling the number of Northeast Michigan counties served (from 4 counties to 11 counties) in between 2013-2016. The School State funding increased from \$300,000 in 2014 to add an additional \$150,000 totaling \$450,000 for 2015-2016. With the increased funding, the State tasked the School Success Program with supporting existing schools as well as expanding into the three remaining counties (Crawford, Ogemaw and Roscommon) in Prosperity Region 3. As a result, the School Success Program has served students and families in five (5) additional schools, and increased the number of students served by 16% (N=114). As of May 2016, School Success served 694 students formally and 1,996 informally, the majority of whom are economically disadvantaged with 78.8% of those students in the School Success Program qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Students were most commonly referred to the School Success Program by teachers. Primary reasons for referral were academic concerns and attendance/crisis. The School Success Liaisons made approximately 50,000 direct contacts with students and their families and well over 13,500 with teacher/administrator. The School Success Staff also made 2,465 referrals and or direct contacts with community partners from September 2015-May 2016. As shown in the content of this report students in the program improved their overall academic performance with 50% in math and 52% in reading. Students in the program who were originally identified as truant showed a 98.7% improvement rate.

References

Michigan Department of Education. (2014). Free and reduced lunch counts. Retrieved from:
<https://www.mischooldata.org/Other/DataFiles/StudentCounts/HistoricalFreeAndReducedLunchCounts.aspx>