



# HOME WORKS!

THE TEACHER HOME VISIT PROGRAM

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## 2010-2011 Evaluation Report

St. Louis Public Schools  
Maplewood Richmond Heights School District

Prepared for:

*Greater St. Louis Community Foundation*

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# The Concept of HOME WORKS!

## Program Overview

HOME WORKS! The Teacher Home Visit Program aims to forge a partnership between home and school through home visits made by school personnel. The program is designed to increase student academic achievement, attendance, parental involvement, and positive attitudes about school as well as to decrease discipline referrals.

The HOME WORKS! Model is two home visits and two family dinners held at school. Two mandatory trainings are held to prepare school personnel for the visits. The purpose of the first home visit is to build relationships between school personnel and the parents/guardians and to learn more about the student's interests and needs. The second home visit focuses on the academic performance of the student. It gives parents/guardians a clear picture of their child's academic strengths and weaknesses and provides tools to increase the parent/guardian's capacity to help their child academically. During each visit, teachers focus on the essential role that parents/guardians play in the education of their children and stress the importance of reading, listening, and talking to them. They share ways parents/guardians can work with their child at home while engaging them as partners in their child's education. Many teachers report that the knowledge gained from home visits has increased their understanding of their students and families and many parents/guardians report a greater comfort level with the teachers, more frequent contact with the school and greater eagerness of their children to attend school as a result of the visits. Parents/guardians also report that home visits allow teachers the opportunity to get to know their children personally. All of these factors can lead to improved academic performance. The family dinners help build and strengthen relationships between school personnel and parents/guardians while educating the families on ways they can academically support their children at home.

In 2010-2011, HOME WORKS! was implemented in two school districts in the St. Louis metropolitan area: St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) and the Maplewood Richmond Heights School District (MRH). During that year, a total of 1,202 home visits were completed by teachers in the participating SLPS and MRH schools.

HOME WORKS! utilizes an independent evaluation team from the University of Missouri – St. Louis. Central to the evaluation was collection and analysis of school performance data (grades and/or standardized assessment data), attendance, disciplinary data and parent/guardian, school principal, teacher, and student perceptions of program effectiveness. Data were collected on both HOME WORKS! and non-HOME WORKS! students to allow for comparisons between those who received home visits and those who did not. Findings from the evaluation of these two districts are presented here.

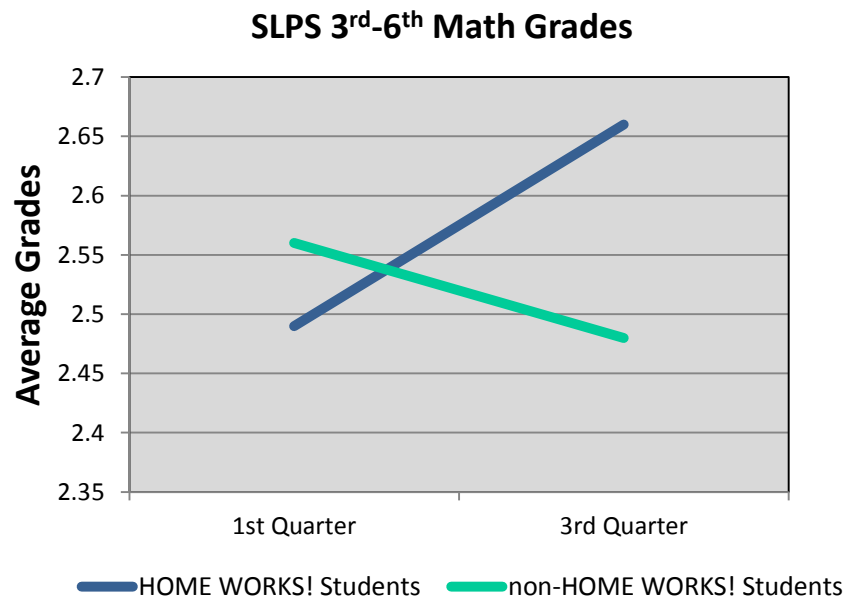
## St. Louis Public Schools

The St. Louis Public School District (SLPS) serves students living in the city of St. Louis, Missouri, a low income area with a median household income of \$34,000 (U.S. Census, 2010). In the year 2010-2011, there were 23,576 students enrolled in SLPS, 85.7% of whom were qualified for free and reduced lunch. Most students (80.5%) are African American, 13.5% are Caucasian, and 6% of students are Asian, Hispanic, or Native American (DESE, 2012). The district struggles academically, and in 2007 lost its accreditation with the Missouri State Board of Education. Since then, the district has shown academic improvement for four consecutive years but has not yet regained accreditation. Four schools from SLPS have participated in HOME WORKS! for the past two years: Buder, Dunbar and Henry Elementary Schools<sup>1</sup> and Stix Early Childhood Center. SLPS teachers completed 616 visits in 2010-2011.

### Findings

#### *Academic Performance*

- Among 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade students, on average, math grades increased for HOME WORKS! students but decreased for non-HOME WORKS! students.



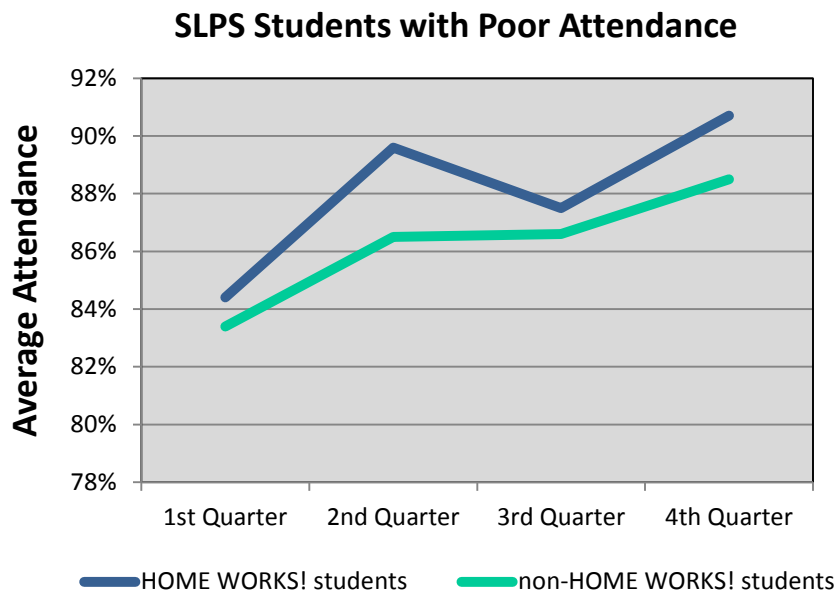
\*Sample sizes: Buder: 142; Dunbar: 91; Stix: 39.

<sup>1</sup> Data were provided from all four participating schools (Buder, Dunbar, Henry and Stix). Due to reliability concerns, data analyses were not conducted for Henry Elementary School.

- Among 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade students, Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test scores in math and communication arts improved on average from 2009-2010 to 2010-2011 for both HOME WORKS! and non-HOME WORKS! students<sup>2</sup>. The increase was greater among HOME WORKS! students.
- There were no differences among HOME WORKS! students and non-HOME WORKS! students in average communication arts grades and Acuity benchmark scores in language arts and math<sup>3</sup>.

**Attendance**

- While average attendance decreased for all students at participating schools between first and fourth quarter, there was less of a decline among HOME WORKS! students.
- Among SLPS students with poor attendance (less than 90% after the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter), there was a greater increase in attendance among HOME WORKS! students.



\*Sample size = 96. Poor attendance is defined as less than 90%.

<sup>2</sup> The MAP test is a state-aligned computerized adaptive assessment program that provides educators with information to improve both their teaching skill and student learning.

<sup>3</sup> The Acuity benchmark system is designed to enable teachers to diagnose student strengths and areas of need. In SLPS, the assessment is given three times in each academic year. Data were provided for students in grades 4 through 6.

**Parent Perceptions of Program Effectiveness**

A total of 44 parents/guardians from Henry, Stix and Dunbar completed surveys in spring 2011.

- Parents/guardians who received home visits reported that after the visits they had more contact and a stronger connection with their child’s school, as well as more frequent attendance at school events.
- About two-thirds of the parents/guardians reported that there had been positive changes in rules about homework, the number of times adults in the household checked to see whether children had homework and whether the homework had been completed.
- Parents/guardians reported that their children’s eagerness to attend school increased after the home visits. Fifty percent (50%) of parents/guardians reported that their children were “very” eager to attend school before the visit and 86% reported children to be “very” eager after the visit.

*“Since my home visit, I spend more time teaching my son to do his best.”*  
*--SLPS parent*

*“Home visits are a great way to get parents more involved with their children and teachers. I really enjoy them and hope I can continue to receive them.”*  
*--SLPS parent*

- After the visits, about 30% of parents/guardians thought that their child’s teacher contacted them more often about academic and behavioral concerns or when their child had done something well.
- Almost all (90%) parents/guardians would like to have a teacher visit their home again.

SLPS Parent/Guardian Responses						
	Very		Somewhat		Not Very	
	Before visit	After visit	Before visit	After visit	Before visit	After visit
How <i>comfortable</i> do you feel contacting your child’s teacher or other adults from the school?	83%	94%	15%	4%	2%	2%
How <i>connected</i> do you feel to your children’s school?	73%	98%	23%	2%	4%	0%
How <i>eager</i> do your child(ren) feel about going to school?	50%	86%	50%	14%	0%	0%

### **Student Perceptions of Program Effectiveness**

A total of 60 students at Dunbar, Henry and Stix completed surveys in spring 2011<sup>4</sup>.

- Almost all (91%) students said they tried harder to do well in school after the home visit. Almost as many (86%) said they were trying harder to get homework done, and 77% felt they were doing better in school after having a home visit.
- Over half (58%) of the students said that they liked coming to school more after their teacher's home visit.
- The majority (59%) of students liked having their teacher visit their home "a lot" and 66% would like their teacher to visit their home next year.

*"I'm doing better since the visit"*  
*--SLPS student*

### **Teacher Perceptions of Program Effectiveness**

A total of 25 teachers completed on-line surveys in spring 2011.

- The majority (65%) of teachers reported that student academic performance improved for some or most of the children after the visits. Over two-thirds thought that at least some or most of their children behaved better and turned in homework more frequently as a result of the home visits. Teachers commented:

*"One of my students just refused to follow the rules of the classroom. After visiting the home and developing a relationship with the parents, the student would forget and call me Mama. I felt there was more respect for me and the class."*

*"One of my students had temper tantrums and as a result of the home visit, the behavior stopped."*

- The greatest improvements were reported in the areas of parent-teacher communication, making personal connections with families, and teacher relationships with students.

*"I really enjoyed making that deeper connection with our students and their families, and learning more about them as people, not just as constituents of the school community."*

*"The home visits create a bond between the parent and me. I was able to see the students in their environment and many students learned that I was not the enemy."*

*"After a home visit, it's easier for me to make a phone call to the parents because we met before and we talked in person. They understand that we just want our children to be better in both academic and behavioral performances."*

- Teachers reported that most parents/guardians were receptive to the visits.

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<sup>4</sup> Parents/Guardians from Buder Elementary did not complete the surveys.

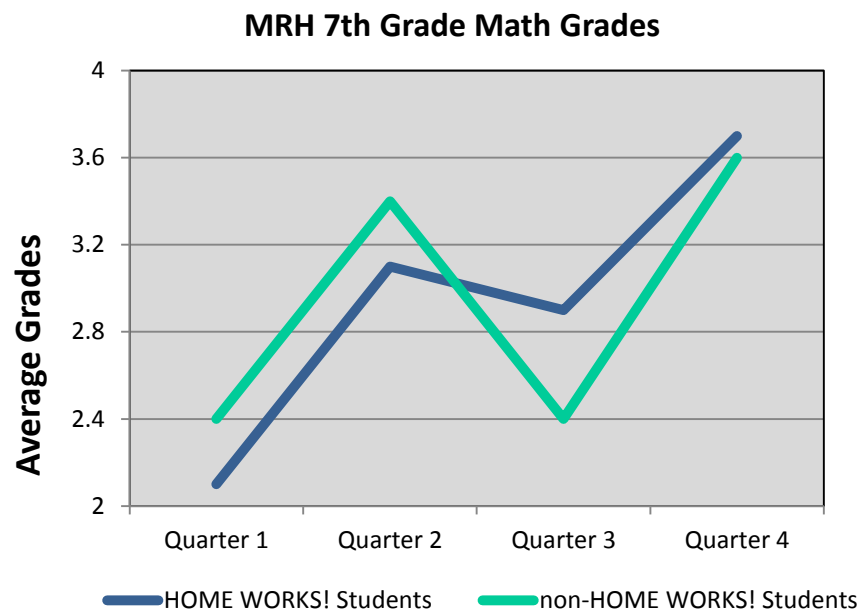
## Maplewood Richmond Heights School District

The Maplewood Richmond Heights (MRH) school district is a small urban school district directly adjacent to the City of St. Louis and it serves students in the municipalities of Maplewood and Richmond Heights, Missouri. The total enrollment at MRH in 2010-2011 was 1,426, over half (50.9%) of whom were eligible for free or reduced lunch. Over half (54.1%) of the student body is Caucasian and 38.1% is African American. Ten years ago, the district was on the verge of being unaccredited but concerted efforts by a new superintendent turned the district around resulting in the district being recognized in 2011 as “Performing with Distinction” by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The district has introduced several programs that support and enhance student learning, including HOME WORKS! in 2008. The superintendent of the MRH school district is deeply committed to HOME WORKS! and believes that establishing a strong bond between parents/guardians and school personnel is the key to student success. In 2010-2011, 586 home visits were completed by MRH Staff.

### Findings

#### *Academic Performance*

- In 2010-2011, on average, math grades for 7<sup>th</sup> grade students improved among both HOME WORKS! and non-HOME WORKS! students<sup>5</sup>.



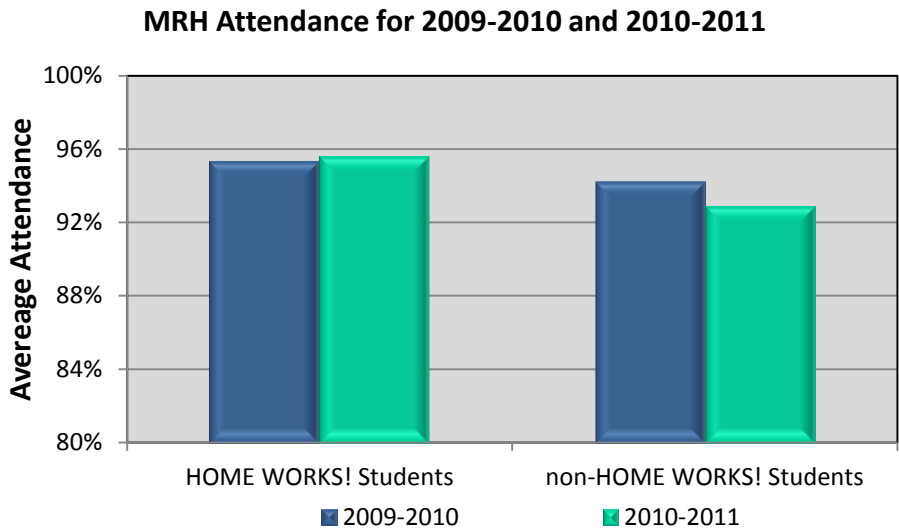
\*Sample Size=64

<sup>5</sup> Academic grades are only recorded for students in the 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades. Home visits were only conducted for students in grades 7 and 9. Math grades for 7<sup>th</sup> grade students ranged from a C (2.0) to an A- (3.7).

- On average, there were no differences among HOME WORKS! students and non-HOME WORKS! students for Reading Curriculum Based Measurements (RCBM)<sup>6</sup> for 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade students, Missouri Assessment Protocol (MAP) scores<sup>7</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> grade Math Level Indicator (MLI) scores<sup>8</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> grade English grades, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade English and math grades.

*Attendance*

- In 2009-2010, average attendance of HOME WORKS! students was slightly higher than non-HOME WORKS! students. Attendance remained about the same from 2009-2010 to 2010-2011 for HOME WORKS! students, but dropped for non-HOME WORKS! students.



\*Sample Size=961

- This trend was even more pronounced among students with poor attendance (less than 90% in the first quarter), where average attendance increased by around 4% among HOME WORKS! students and decreased by 2% among non-HOME WORKS! students.

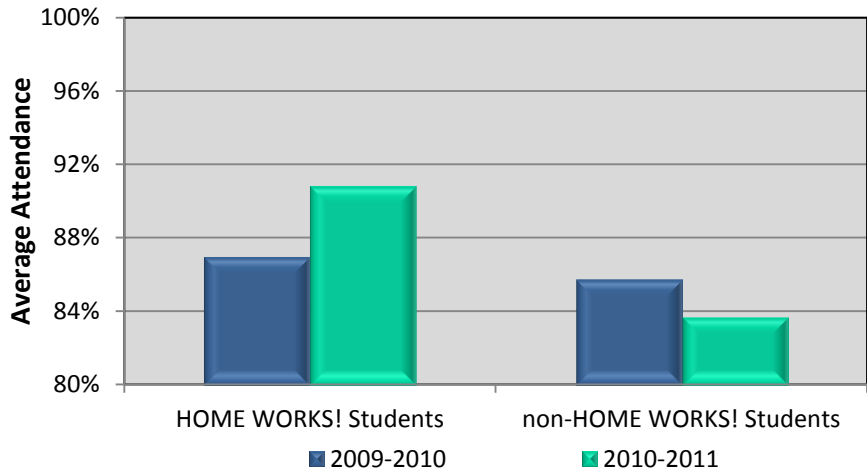
<sup>6</sup> Reading Curriculum Based Measurements (RCBM). Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) is a set of standardized procedures for collecting student data in the basic skill areas of reading, math computation, spelling, and written expression.

<sup>7</sup> The MAP test is a state-aligned computerized adaptive assessment program that provides educators with information to improve both their teaching skill and student learning.

<sup>8</sup> Math Level Indicator (MLI)



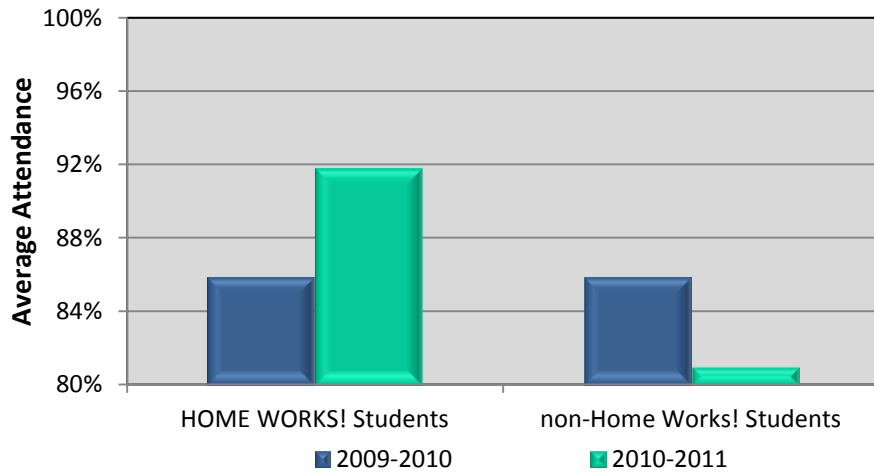
### MRH Students with Poor Attendance



\*Sample Size=132

- The same trend was present for African American students, students on free or reduced lunch, and African-American students on free or reduced lunch.
- Among African American students with poor attendance, HOME WORKS! student average attendance increased by 6% and non-HOME WORKS! student average attendance dropped almost 5%.

### MRH African American Students with Poor Attendance



\*Sample Size=55

**Parent Perceptions of Program Effectiveness**

A total of 78 parents/guardians completed a survey in October 2010 and May 2011.

- The percentage of parents/guardians who felt comfortable contacting the teachers increased by 40% from 49% to 89%.
- About twice as many parents/guardians reported they felt more connected to the school after the home visit (44%-86%). One parent stated:

*“I felt the teacher got a chance to know my child personally, and I made a personal connection as well.”*

*“The home visit helped prepare my daughter for her transition from elementary to middle school, and helped set the tone for a great school year.”*  
--MRH Parent

- 72% of parents/guardians reported that their children were “very” eager to attend school after the home visit compared to 33% before.
- Most (79%) parents/guardians stated they would like to have a home visit again next year. Parents stated:

*“We feel the program is a very valuable asset to the district and provides a unique window through which teachers can view their students’ home environments and sometimes derive solutions to problems they may be having in the classroom.”*

*“Knowing the teachers take the time and effort to do this automatically instills a level of trust between teachers and parents...The fact that both teachers seemed to really enjoy being there reinforced our regard for them as partners in our children’s upbringing.”*

MRH Parent/Guardian Responses						
	Very		Somewhat		Not Very	
	Before visit	After visit	Before visit	After visit	Before visit	After visit
How comfortable do you feel contacting your child’s teacher or other adults from the school?	49%	89%	46%	11%	6%	0%
How connected do you feel to your children’s school?	44%	86%	42%	14%	9%	0%
How eager do your child(ren) feel about going to school?	33%	72%	50%	20%	15%	8%

### ***Teacher Perceptions of Program Effectiveness***

In fall 2010 and spring 2011, 31 teachers at MRH completed an online survey exploring their satisfaction with the trainings, home visits, and perceived impact of the program.

- 72% of teachers reported that some or most of their students turned in homework assignments more frequently following the home visits.
- The majority (64%) of teachers reported that student academic performance improved for some or most of the children after the home visit.
- More than two-thirds (69%) of teachers thought that some or most of their children behave better as a result of the home visits.
- Overall, the greatest improvement was reported in the areas of parent-teacher communication, making personal connections with families, and the teacher's relationship with the students. According to one teacher,

*"Communication with parents and teachers increased greatly. Homework improved, parent support increased."*

Another teacher noted:

*"The home visits helped me to obtain general knowledge of where students come from, their background, what their home/family situation is like, etc... all this can be HUGELY beneficial for the upcoming school year through HOME WORKS!. I know personally this has helped me with several students this year because I know their background, have a more personal/better relationship with their parents, and I think that can only ADD to student's successes both inside and out of school."*

- 64% of teachers reported that parents/guardians were very receptive to the visits and 70% would definitely recommend HOME WORKS! to other districts.

### ***Student Perceptions of Program Effectiveness***

A total of 41 MRH middle school students completed a survey in spring 2011.

- Around 25% responded that they liked having their teacher visit "a lot" and 56% said they liked having their teacher visit "a little." One student noted:

*"It was okay, just a little nerve wracking."*

Another stated:

*"I feel a lot more comfortable at the beginning of the year once I meet with my teachers. Once I get to know them and what the school year will be like then I don't feel as worried."*

- Around 25% of students felt they could talk more easily with their teacher about a question or problem, and close to half felt closer to their teacher after the home visit.
- Some students (24%) felt encouraged to try harder in school after the home visit. Almost as many (18%) said they were trying harder on homework after the visit, and 18% also thought they were doing better in school after the home visit.

### **Summary of HOME WORKS! Impact in Both Districts and Implications for School Improvement Efforts**

The findings from the evaluation of the HOME WORKS! program for 2010-2011 are promising.

- At MRH, attendance among HOME WORKS! students improved from 2009-2010 to 2010-2011, particularly for those students who began the year with poor attendance. Differences were most pronounced among *African American students with poor attendance*. MRH HOME WORKS! student average attendance increased by 6% and non-HOME WORKS! student attendance dropped almost 5%.
- At SLPS, average attendance decreased overall, but the decrease was less pronounced among HOME WORKS! students.
- SLPS HOME WORKS! students *with poor attendance* increased their attendance at a greater rate than non-HOME WORKS! students.
- At both SLPS and MRH, school performance data indicate that the program has had a positive impact on math grades.
- From the perspectives of teacher, parents, students and administrators, the program in both districts improved academic achievement and behaviors, student-teacher connectedness, teacher-parent communication, and parent connectedness to school.

Both academic achievement and attendance rates are major indicators of school performance. The evaluation suggests that consistent implementation of the HOME WORKS! Teacher Home Visit Program model, can have a positive impact on student success in school.