



Getting Patrick Henry Connected – August 2020–June 2021

An overview of HOME WORKS! 10-month initiative at Patrick Henry Downtown Academy

Mission Statement: To ensure that all students, parents, and teachers at Patrick Henry Downtown Academy had the training, resources, and volunteer support they needed to address the burdens caused by COVID-19, and to strengthen the support structure for future challenges.

Why: The Covid pandemic laid bare the educational and resource inequities facing disadvantaged families across the country. The most vulnerable students were forced into the least desirable learning situations with inadequate tools and support systems to navigate them.

Patrick Henry Downtown Academy (PH) in St. Louis Public Schools was one of the many schools acutely impacted by the pandemic. In spring 2020, it took one of our teachers 23 days to find her 21 students. HOME WORKS! (HW!) didn't have the money or the expertise to get the students in our low-performing schools connected to the internet so we came up with a BHAG - Big Hairy Audacious Goal: To go into just one of our schools and do everything we could for every student, parent, and teacher to thrive during this chaotic time, and then document everything we did to share locally and nationally. We brought together nonprofits, business leaders, public utility companies, school district leaders, social workers, and academics to 'do whatever it takes' to help Patrick Henry weather the tumultuous effects of Covid.

What: At its core, the *Getting Patrick Henry Connected* initiative partnered teachers, parents, and the community for students' academic success and was designed to:

1. Connect the school and its families to community stakeholders such as city services, utility companies, nonprofits, university academics, and local businesses.
2. Enhance the capacity of the school and families through the support of a team of over 50 volunteers.
3. Empower parents to support and advocate for their children's education.
4. Build proven, successful processes for enabling and supporting remote learning among disadvantaged students.

How: Centered around a commitment to the success of all PH students and their families, *Getting Patrick Henry Connected* was a dynamic initiative that was responsive to emerging challenges. We worked in all 14 classrooms, serving 237 students (165 families). It was designed to produce results that would be measured and shared locally and nationally.

Demographics of Patrick Henry: Patrick Henry is a neighborhood school with 80% of the students living within walking distance, many in the subsidized housing developments that surround the school. 98% of the students are African American. There is a 40% mobility rate (40% of the students and their families move every year), and 100% of the students receive free or reduced meals. The vast majority of PH students read below grade level and the school has struggled to earn the trust and engagement of the families it serves. It is common for Patrick Henry's parents to have several jobs, and most families live without internet access outside of school-provided hotspots.

Research Case Study/Playbook and Evaluation: A team of academics from Washington University's Olin Business School and School of Medicine, and the University of Missouri's College of Education created a playbook and a case study of *Getting Patrick Henry Connected*.

History: HOME WORKS! The Teacher Home Visit Program (HW!) was founded in St. Louis in 2004 to train, support, and pay teachers in low-performing schools to go to the homes of their struggling students to get their parents and families engaged in their education. HW! began in a handful of elementary schools and has since served 116 early childhood, elementary, middle, and high schools in urban, suburban, and rural districts in Missouri, including charter schools in St. Louis. During that time, HW! trained 2,760 teachers who made almost 30,000 home visits, primarily to at-risk families.

BHAG: *Getting Patrick Henry Connected* was a BHAG – a **Big Hairy Audacious Goal**. A BHAG is a long-term goal that changes the very nature of an organization's existence. A BHAG is nearly impossible to achieve without consistently working outside of a comfort zone and displaying commitment, confidence, and even a bit of arrogance. BHAGs are exciting, tangible and something everyone just "gets" without any further explanation. The driving element of a BHAG is a willingness to completely change your mindset and commit to doing something differently from the way it has been done before.

Decades of research show that reciprocal and trusting relationships are the foundation on which educators and families can overcome educational obstacles. The role of families in supporting the education of their children has never been more important.