



**IMPLEMENTATION  
FINDINGS FROM THE  
HOME WORKS!  
THE TEACHER  
HOME VISIT PROGRAM**



**2016 -17 ANNUAL  
EVALUATION REPORT**



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## Introduction

Since its founding in 2006, HOME WORKS! The Teacher Home Visit Program has partnered with more than 70 public schools across the greater St. Louis region and central Missouri to bring together parents and teachers as partners in education. HOME WORKS! is a non-profit organization that trains teachers in mostly low income, underperforming schools to reach out to families of their students to more effectively engage them in the learning process. Teachers and other school staff visit families in their homes twice throughout the school year and host family dinners in the school setting to foster positive, productive home-school connections. The program focuses on increasing parent and teacher engagement as a mechanism to improve students' daily attendance, homework completion, classroom behavior, and academic achievement.

HOME WORKS provides leadership and training, stipends for school-level coordinators, and direct compensation to schools for 50 percent of extra service pay for teachers to support their program involvement. HOME WORKS! is managed by an administrative team that includes Program Directors assigned to each school who provide guidance and support for implementation. The HOME WORKS! organization is overseen by a Board of Directors whose members include former educators, advocates, and community leaders who are strongly committed to the program's mission and vision. HOME WORKS! also benefits from collaboration and funding support from numerous community and corporate partners and donors.

HOME WORKS!, as an organization, places strong value on evaluation and continuous quality improvement. Each year, HOME WORKS! funds evaluations of its programs to assess implementation strength and program efficacy. The program has recently contracts with an outside evaluation firm, Evaluation, Management, and Training (EMT) Associates, Inc., to conduct process evaluations of the program as implemented each year for the purpose of building on lessons learned through implementation to support program improvement, sustainability, and replication. The organization is also involved in a more rigorous, randomized controlled trial (RCT) being funded by the U.S. Department of Education to assess student academic and behavioral outcomes resulting from teacher home visit participation.

The evaluation approach for 2016-17 was designed to answer the following study questions:

- How many schools, school staff, students and families participated in HOME WORKS! program activities?
- How well was the program implemented with respect to fidelity to the program model?
- What were the most important implementation challenges and successes identified by teachers?
- What were teachers' and families' perceptions of the impact of teacher home visits on parent engagement, teaching and learning, and student achievement?

Evaluation findings were informed by three key data collection components:

**Online home visit logs.** Teachers and school staff are required to record information about home visits in an online log that was completed within 24 hours of the conclusion of each home visit. The log provides detailed information about each visit including date, time, location, presence of family members, characteristics of the child, and subjective information about the visit, such as insights gained about the child's strengths, needs, and home life. Each year the teacher home visit log has been refined as part of a continuous quality improvement effort.

**Teacher surveys.** Teachers and other school staff (n=59) who participated in home visits were asked to respond to a brief end-of-year survey to provide feedback on the home visit experience and to share perceptions of student outcomes resulting from home visit participation.

**Parent feedback forms.** Parents and family members (n=205) who attended family dinners were asked to respond to a brief survey to provide feedback on the family dinner, and to share their experiences with teacher home visits.

The present report summarizes data findings from the 2016-17 program evaluation effort. The report documents the home visit implementation process, summarizes teacher and parent perceptions of the teacher home visit experience, and identifies implementation strengths and challenges that may inform future program replication and sustainability efforts.



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# HOME WORKS! Program Structure

HOME WORKS! partnered with 7 school districts and 14 schools during the 2016-17 school year. Schools included a mix of early education centers, elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. Eleven of the schools were continuing in the program, and three were new to the program this school year. Since the program was founded, the number of districts and schools has expanded and contracted, as new schools are recruited to participate, established programs become institutionalized within their school systems, and schools that struggled with implementation are discontinued.

The HOME WORKS! program goal is to build trusting, quality relationships between parents and teachers and to promote the adoption of effective parenting practices that will help children succeed academically. The program's underlying logic is that through the home visit process, teachers build positive relationships with families, and gain new insights into student strengths and needs that can shape instructional practices, and enhance the quality of parent-teacher interactions. Parents, in turn, learn about their child's progress in school and their own role in the learning process, gain access to tools and resources they can use to support home-based learning, and adopt more positive orientations toward schools. Resulting changes in teaching and parenting practices lead to improvements in school attendance, homework completion, classroom behavior, and academic achievement. This program logic is illustrated in more detail in the HOME WORKS! logic model shown on the following page.

The HOME WORKS! program has several models, or variations in the program design, that differ with respect to program location (school- and home-based versus home-based only), populations of focus (young children versus adolescents), and program components, but that share a core emphasis on establishing parent-teacher learning partnerships. Schools select the program model that is best suited to their school community and most responsive to student and family needs.

## Elementary School Model

The standard HOME WORKS! parent engagement model is a school-wide model that includes two staff trainings, two home visits and two family dinners. The school-wide model is classroom-based and is typically implemented by teachers in early childhood education centers and elementary school settings. Schools that implement the school-wide model are expected to engage at least 50% of all classroom teachers and to encourage broad-based or universal involvement of students and families within those classrooms to the extent feasible. During the 2016-17 school year, the standard model was implemented across six elementary schools and one early childhood education center. These programs collectively served 994 students and their families and completed 1,410 home visits with parents and family members.

## Secondary School Model

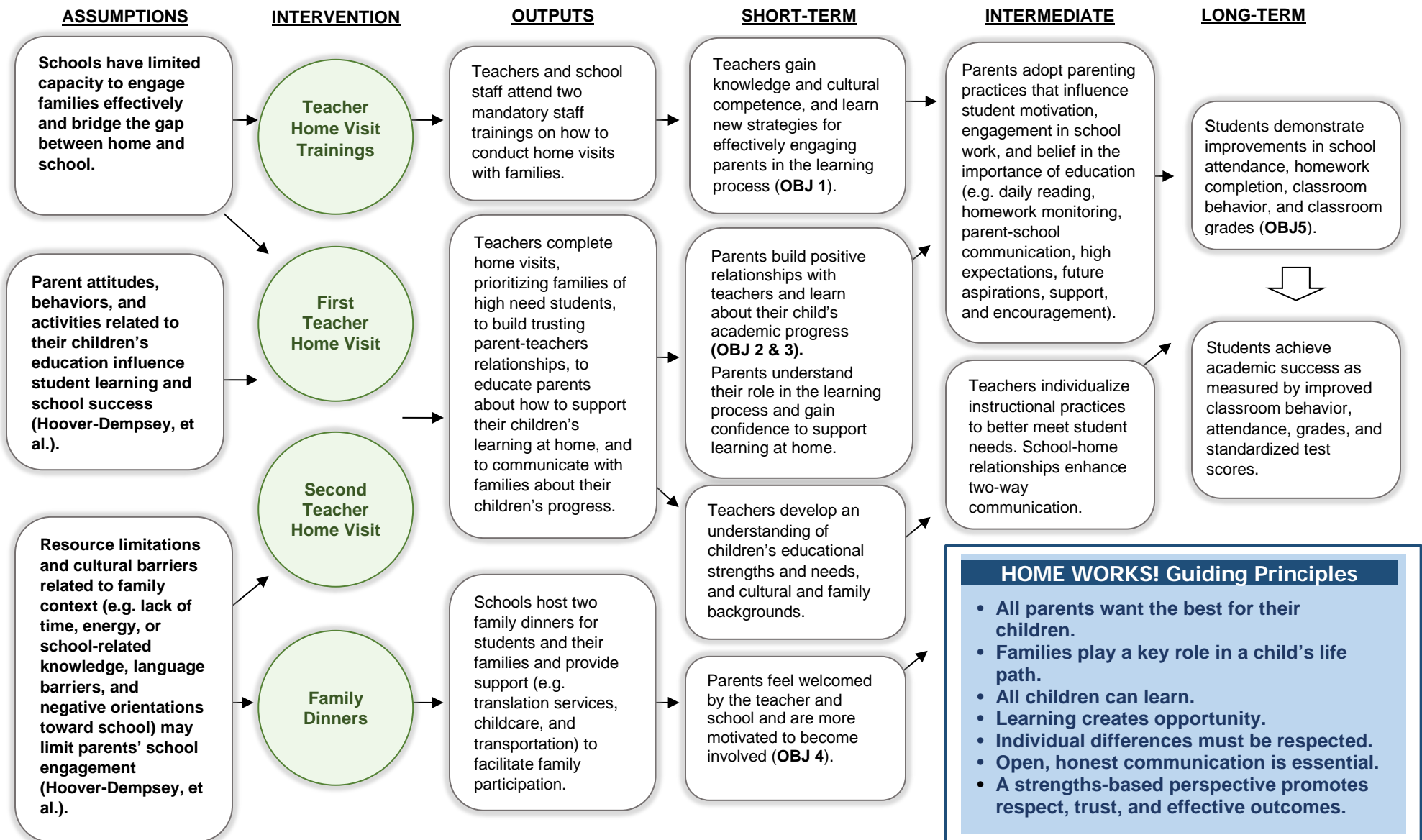
The secondary school model is a variation of the school-wide model that has been adapted for secondary school settings. Unlike the more universal approach of the school-wide model, in secondary schools, a select number of students are identified for home visits based on indicated needs for academic or behavioral support. Home visits are conducted by paired teams of teachers and school counselors who are knowledgeable of the student's academic performance. Unlike the elementary model, secondary schools may opt to only conduct first visits and/or to only sponsor one family dinner. At the high school level, home visits are typically limited to 9th grade students with the intent of supporting school transitions. During the 2016-17 school year, three middle schools and two high schools implemented teacher home visits with their students. These programs collectively served 146 students and their families and completed 195 home visits.

## Parent-Teacher Learning Teams (PTLT)

The Parent Teacher Learning Team (PTLT) is a variation of the standard school-wide model that combines one teacher home visit with school-based parent engagement activities, including parent-teacher conferences and classroom-based instructional sessions for parents and other family members. The PTLT model was implemented in two elementary schools in the 2016-17 school year. PTLT schools served 116 students and their families through home visits and classroom-based sessions.



# HOME WORKS! The Teacher Home Visit Program Logic Model



## Why is There a Need for HOME WORKS!?

- 63% of all Missouri public school students (grades 3-8) achieve grade level proficiency in English/Language Arts and only 48% of students achieve grade level proficiency in math (2016).
- Economically-disadvantaged students and students of color experience significant education disparities. Only 50% of low income students and 40% of African-American students achieve grade level proficiency in English/Language Arts, and only 35% of low income students and 25% of African-American students achieve grade level proficiency in math (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016).

# Participation among Staff, Students, and Families

HOME WORKS! typically partners with economically disadvantaged, underperforming schools to enhance parent engagement in learning and bridge the gap between home and school. Schools that participate each year are highly diverse with respect to their school populations and implementation approach. This section of the report describes the schools that participated in HOME WORKS! during the 2016-17 school year, the student populations they served, and the staff, students and families who participated in teacher home visits over the duration of the school year.

## School Participation

School districts and individual schools either voluntarily request to participate in HOME WORKS! or are recruited into the program through the HOME WORKS! organization. School districts that choose to partner with HOME WORKS! must sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining expectations for school and program involvement, and must work with HOME WORKS! staff to establish parameters for program implementation (e.g., participation targets, timelines). Minimally, schools commit to a five-year implementation timeline.

The 14 schools that participated in 2016-17 collectively enrolled more than 6,300 students. Schools included one early childhood education center serving preschool-age children, eight elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools. Exhibit 1 below describes the enrolled student populations of participating schools, including number of students enrolled, grade span served, urban or rural location, socio-economic status, and race or ethnic composition. HOME WORKS! schools were diverse, representing a mix of urban, suburban, and rural school settings located across St. Louis and central Missouri. Eight schools were located in large or mid-size cities, three schools were located in large suburbs, and one school was mostly rural. Schools were medium-to-large in size, enrolling anywhere from 250 to more than 650 students.

Schools varied with respect to the racial and ethnic composition of their enrolled populations. Four schools were predominantly African-American (>95% Black), and 10 schools were racially and ethnically diverse, enrolling a mix of White, Black and Hispanic students and students of other races. All schools performed below statewide averages on measures of student achievement. Twelve schools received Title I funds and served high concentrations of families living at or below poverty.

**Exhibit 1. HOME WORKS! School Enrollment Composition**

	School	Grade	Urban/ Rural	Total enrolled	% FRPL	% White	% Black	% Hispanic	% Other
Elementary	101	Pre K-5	Midsize city	466	60%	55%	24%	6%	15%
	102	Pre K-5	Large suburb	452	56%	0%	98%	0%	1%
	103	Pre K-5	Large city	441	100%	12%	74%	11%	3%
	104	Pre K-6	Large city	245	100%	0%	99%	0%	1%
	105	Pre K-5	Large city	401	100%	51%	28%	10%	10%
	106	Pre K-5	Rural fringe	505	70%	80%	3%	10%	7%
	107	Pre K-5	Large city	427	100%	9%	80%	10%	1%
	108	Pre K-5	Large city	403	100%	13%	82%	4%	1%
Secondary	201	6-8	Large suburb	653	74%	2%	97%	1%	0%
	202	6-8	Large suburb	659	18%	75%	8%	3%	14%
	203	6-8	Large suburb	662	80%	33%	44%	15%	8%
	301	9-12	Large city	396	100%	3%	82%	3%	12%
	302	9-12	Large city	645	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Notes: Student enrollment information from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) was unavailable for the early education program. Selected schools no longer track Free-Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) eligibility and instead offer FRPL to all students.

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## Staff Training

Teachers, school administrators, and other school staff who choose to participate in HOME WORKS! must attend two staff trainings to build capacity around parent engagement and to prepare to conduct home visits with families. The provision of training to all teachers and other school staff who participate in home visits is one of five key HOME WORKS! program objectives that are used for program monitoring and performance measurement purposes. First home visit trainings are typically scheduled in the spring or early summer months, and second home visit trainings are held before school starts or in the early fall before second home visits are initiated. Returning teachers and school staff who have previously been trained and were active in the program in a previous school year were only required to attend one refresher training each year of their continuing involvement. This school year, all staff were also required to attend a supplemental training on how to record completed visits in the new online portal that was used for monitoring visit completion and for teacher compensation and district reimbursement.

### Objective 1

Provide training to 100% of teachers and school staff who are conducting home visits to enhance teachers' capacity to engage parents in the learning process.

HOME WORKS! implemented 47 in-person training sessions and trained 396 school staff in the 2016-17 program year. About half of staff trained went on to become active in the program (49%). In certain schools, administrators opted to train all school staff as part of in-service training sessions, regardless of their intent to participate in the program. This approach explains the high percentage of trained staff who did not go on to conduct home visits.

At the end of the school year, all home visitors were asked to complete an online survey to provide feedback on their program experience in key areas, including training. When asked to rate the training program's overall effectiveness in preparing them to conduct home visits, responses were highly favorable. More than 80% of respondents rated the quality of training as either 'good' or 'excellent', exceeding the 75% targeted objective for training effectiveness.

82%

of home visitors rated their training experience as either 'good' or 'excellent'.

Respondents who rated the training as somewhat less effective, were invited to provide suggestions for how the training could be improved. Those who provided feedback (n=9) offered several recommendations, including providing greater transparency regarding the amount of time required to set-up and prepare for visits, incorporating additional practice scenarios, providing more information specific to individual schools, and providing more information about the impact of visits on students and families. One home visitor felt that the trainer leading the session seemed unsure about the program's mission and message, and seemed unfamiliar with their school. Another felt that the way home visits were portrayed in the training was not a realistic representation.

This information, combined with more specific training feedback collected at the end of each session, has been used to continuously update and refine training content.

## School Administrator and Site Coordinator Roles

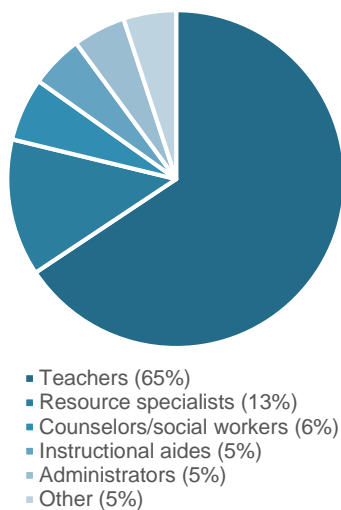
At the school level, the HOME WORKS! program is implemented under the leadership of a school administrator with support from one or two site coordinators recruited from within the school building. Site Coordinators are teachers or other school staff who receive a stipend to manage the program and to support teacher involvement.

School administrators are expected to serve as program proponents who are active in recruiting staff to participate, and ensuring that schools are meeting program expectations. Principals and Assistant Principals in four schools also participated in home visits as either lead or co-visitors. When asked in online surveys about how actively Principals were involved, more than two-thirds of home visitors (68%) reported that their administrators were 'very active' in promoting the program, while another quarter (25%) felt that they were at least 'somewhat active'. Teachers from the five highest performing schools, in terms of the number of visits completed, all rated their school administrators as 'very active' on average.

## Teacher and Staff Participation

School staff participate in home visits on a voluntary basis, or as a requirement of the school administration. Staff conduct home visits in two-person teams comprised of a lead and co-visitor, with an interpreter as needed. The lead visitor is typically the child's classroom teacher or other staff member who has knowledge of the student's needs and academic progress. Co-visitors may be anyone in the school-building who is trained to conduct visits with families. Staff are encouraged to configure teams so that at least one team member shares the family's culture, or race or ethnic identity. Given that participation was voluntary in most school settings, one of the key study questions for the evaluation was how many teachers and school staff chose to conduct teacher home visits and how participation varied across school settings. This question has relevance for program replication to new school settings, as it informs discussion of what constitutes a minimal level of staff participation to warrant the investment of program resources.

**Exhibit 2.** Lead and Co-Visitors by Position



In all, a total of 222 teachers and other school personnel conducted home visits with families during the 2016–17 school year. As shown in exhibit 2 above, school personnel listed by position title, included classroom teachers and special education (SPED) instructors (65%), resource specialists (13%), school counselors and social workers (6%), instructional aides and para-educators (5%), school administrators (5%), and other school staff (5%). The number of staff participating across schools varied widely, ranging from as few as 4 to as many as 31 lead and co-visitors within a school-building.

Teacher surveys administered at the end of the 2016–17 school year help document some of the reasons that staff chose to become involved with the teacher home visit program. Respondents were presented with a series of statements about why they might choose to participate, and were then asked to indicate how 'true' each statement was for them. Response options ranged from 'very true' to 'not true at all'. According to survey findings:

- More than three-quarters of all teachers and other school staff (77%) chose to participate in the program because they believed that their students would benefit from home visits.
- Teachers and school staff were also driven by the belief that home visits would help them teach more effectively (75% 'true' or 'very true'.)
- More than half (56%) were persuaded to participate because a school administrator had encouraged them to get involved, while 39% noted that they were required to participate by their school administration.
- About half of teachers and other school staff (43%) also viewed the opportunity to earn extra money as a major motivating factor.

School staff were also asked to share, in their own words, why they chose to become involved in the program. Several themes emerged from their responses (n=55), including an interest in building relationships with families (53%), getting to know their students outside of the school setting and learning about their home environments (11%), strengthening communication with families (9%), supporting students' school success (9%), giving students a positive start to the school year (5%), and wanting to convey a message to students that their teachers care about them (5%). Relatively few staff (9%) noted that their primary motivation was a requirement to participate.

**“Making a connection between school and home is vital to progress for most of our children. They need to understand that we know and respect their home lives without judgement. Only then can healthy relationships be built.”**



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## Prioritizing Students for Home Visits

The HOME WORKS! model emphasizes teacher outreach to parents and family members with the goal of building trusting parent-teacher relationships, and more effectively engaging families in the learning process. While some schools aim to reach all students in the school building, the HOME WORKS! parent outreach strategy prioritizes highest need students and families to ensure that program resources are targeted to those most likely to benefit from the intervention. This strategy also acknowledges that time constraints may limit the number of families who teachers can reasonably serve.

For the first time in 2016-17, schools were required to identify a *priority student goal*, which represents the targeted number of students and families that schools anticipate their teachers will visit, based on levels of student and family need and levels of staff participation. For the 2016-17 school year, most elementary schools implementing the standard model set a priority student goal of 200 – 300 students, representing anywhere from 40% – 76% of their enrolled student populations.

Secondary schools typically set lower student priority goals ranging from 30 – 150 students, representing anywhere from 5% – 25% of students enrolled. This variation in the priority goal reflects differences between the more universal, elementary school model and the more selective, secondary school model, which identifies an eligible pool of students and families based on indicated need. This variation also highlights differences in staff participation and school approach (for example, some schools strongly encourage teachers to attempt to visit all students in their classrooms).

At the classroom level, teachers were provided guidance to help them select students for home visits. Specifically, staff were provided the following set of criteria to prioritize outreach to families:

- Students performing below grade level
- Students with discipline problems
- New students or families without a positive teacher/ school relationship
- Immigrant/ English Language Learners families
- Students who are chronically absent
- Students with an Individualized Education Plan

On teacher and staff surveys administered at the end of the school year, lead visitors were asked to identify the general approach they used to select their students and families for participation. Nearly half of lead visitors surveyed selected students based on priority need (47%), whereas almost the same percentage (43%) attempted to visit all families in their classrooms. The other ten percent did not adhere to program guidelines, and instead, either reached out to parents on a first-come, first-served basis, or selected students in response to parent requests. About one-third of lead visitors surveyed (33%) believed that they had been ‘very successful’ in reaching students who met need criteria, and about half (50%) felt they had been at least ‘somewhat successful’. The remaining 17% indicated that they were ‘not very successful’ in engaging their highest need students and families. Later sections of the report will explore some of the specific challenges that lead visitors encountered that may have prevented them from reaching higher need families.

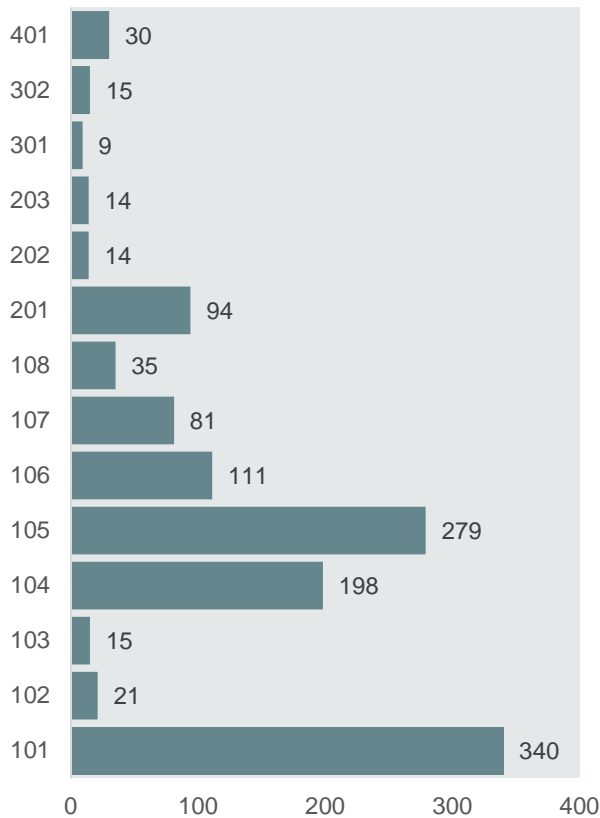
## Students and Families Served

In all, schools completed first visits with 1,256 students and their families in 2016-17. The number of completed first visits serves as a proxy for the total number of students and families served by the program, as all students must participate in at least one home visit to be defined as a program participant. The number of students across school setting is shown in exhibit 3 on the following page, reported by school identifier. The exhibit illustrates the wide variation in program reach, ranging from as few as 9 participating students and families in one high school to 340 students and families in one elementary school. Five of 14 participating schools engaged 15 or fewer students and families in home visits, whereas 6 schools had 80 students or more.

### Objective 2

Complete first home visits with at least 65% of identified high need, priority students to build positive parent-teacher relationships and to introduce parents to educational practices that promote student learning and school success.

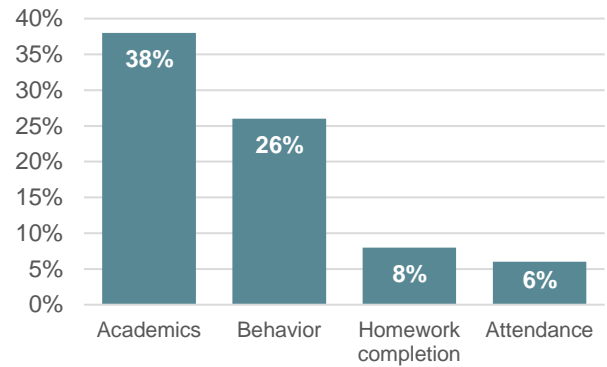
**Exhibit 3. Students and Families Reached**



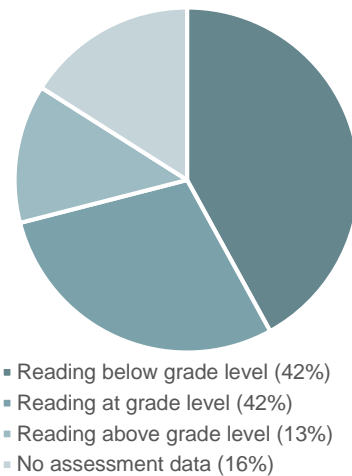
Information recorded in online visit logs, summarized for students served across all schools, provides insight into the types of academic and behavioral needs that prompted teachers to select families for home visits. As shown in exhibits 4 and 5, among students whose families received visits from teachers, about 38% had academic needs, 26% had behavioral concerns, 8% had challenges completing homework, and 6% had poor school attendance. About 42% of students were reading below grade level on standardized assessments.

Online visit logs also indicate that 15% of all students receiving first visits were English Language Learners (ELL), 10% were Special Education (SPED) students, and less than 2% of children served were homeless. About 21% of all children and families visited in 2016-17 were new to their schools, providing evidence of the high rate of mobility in communities. About 17% of all children visited were kindergarten age, and of those, nearly a quarter had never attended preschool.

**Exhibit 4. Students with Identified Needs**



**Exhibit 5. Student Reading Level**



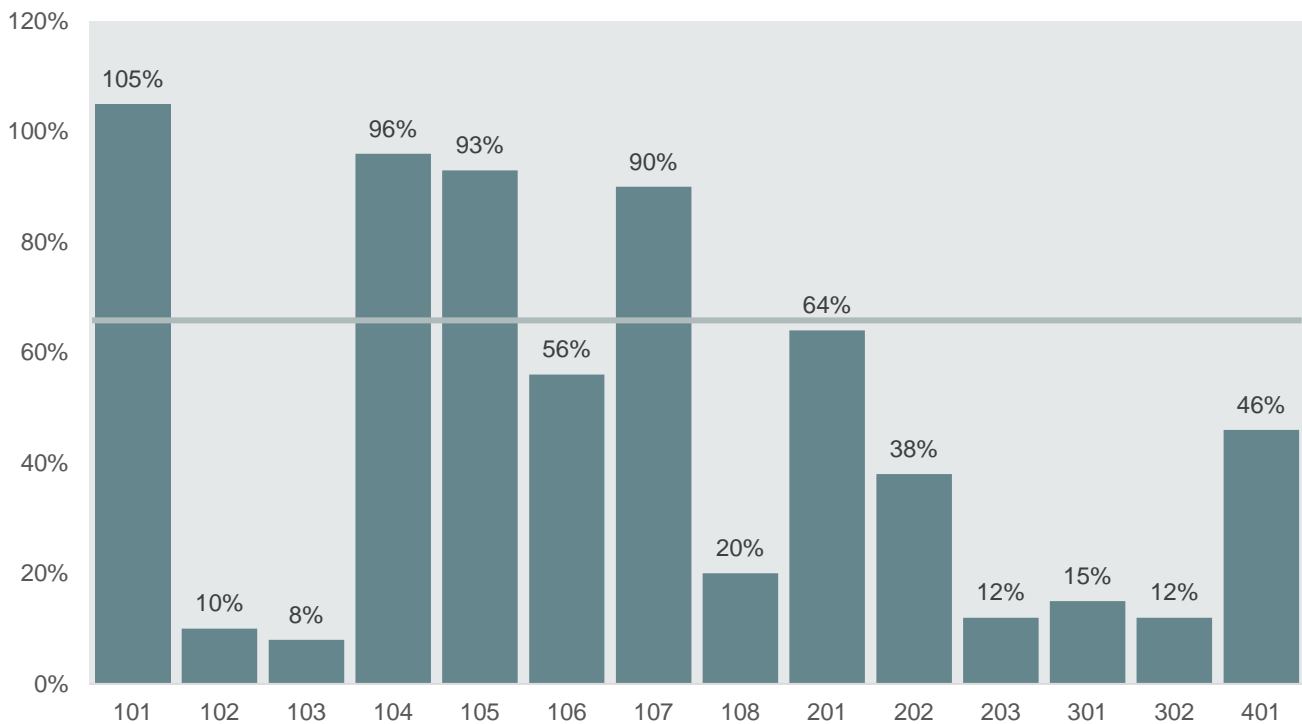
Lead visitors who participated in year-end surveys stated that they were most likely to prioritize students who were performing far below grade level, those who were experiencing behavior or discipline issues in the classroom, or students who were frequently late or absent from school. Teachers were least likely to prioritize marginal students who were performing slightly below grade level, or students whose families were disengaged from the school community.

This profile of students served through HOME WORKS! suggests that the program was successful in reaching a high need student population that would benefit from intervention support. However, the data on student participation also uncovered significant variation in the overall number of students benefitting from the program, and the relative success of schools in meeting targets for participation.

More specifically, the HOME WORKS! organization set an objective for 2016-17 that schools should be successful in reaching at least 65% of priority students to build positive parent-teacher relationships and to introduce parents to educational practices that promote student learning and school success. These practices include daily reading, homework monitoring, regular school attendance, home-school communication, support and encouragement. Each priority student goal was established in consultation with school administrators, with consideration given to the number of staff members who planned to participate, and the program model selected by the school. For all schools combined, the priority student goal was to reach at least 2,276 students and their families, representing 38% of total enrollment across early education, elementary, and secondary schools.

The actual number of students and families reached by the program in 2016-17 (n =1,256) accounted for a little more than half of the priority goal (55%). This number compares to the minimum target established by HOME WORKS! of reaching at least 65% of priority students as an objective for measuring program performance. As shown in exhibit 6 below, at the individual school level, only four schools achieved at least 65% of their target for 2016-17. This finding raises questions concerning differences in school commitment and capacity to implement the program design as planned, and underscores the need to more closely assess how home visits were implemented within school-buildings, and where barriers and challenges occurred that may have prevented schools from achieving full implementation. This issue is the focus of the next section of the report that addresses implementation fidelity in greater depth.

**Exhibit 6.** Completed First Visits as a Percentage of the Priority Need Target



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## Home Visit Implementation

A key focus of the process evaluation was on assessing how well the program was implemented with respect to fidelity to the standard model. Fidelity assessment measures the degree to which interventions are implemented as planned and the extent to which the program “as planned” is reflected in the program “as implemented”. Fidelity is important because stronger fidelity to the program model increases confidence that changes in outcomes can be attributed to program strategies.

The standard teacher home visit model is structured to include two visits to the student’s home. Each visit has a specific purpose and objectives. The first visit is intended to build positive parent-teacher relationships, improve communication, cultivate positive family orientations toward school, and motivate parents to engage in their children’s learning. As a new priority for 2016-17, first visits were also used to communicate with families about the importance of regular school attendance. The second visit is intended to educate parents about school expectations, to discuss parental roles in supporting children’s academic success, and to review students’ academic progress. By design, families must participate in a first visit before receiving a second visit.

There are also specific design elements of the HOME WORKS! program that school staff are expected to implement. These elements include the following:

- Location of visits
- Timing of visits
- Student involvement in the visit
- Completion of two visits
- Participation in family dinners

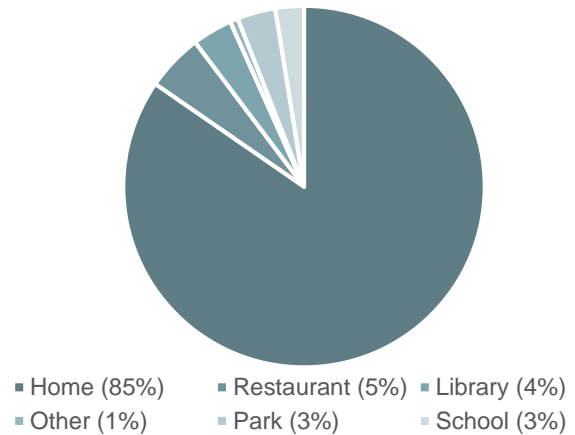
The next few sections present data from online logs to assess how closely schools adhered to the proposed program model when implementing visits with families.

### Location of Visits

The HOME WORKS! model emphasizes the importance of conducting home visits in the child’s home environment as a strategy to promote understanding of the family’s culture and home life, and to help the teacher assess conditions in the home that may support or limit a child’s opportunity for learning and school success. In some instances, however, the family will request that the visit take place in other locations. This accommodation may have resulted in higher numbers of families agreeing to a visit who might otherwise have declined.

Teacher logs indicate that in 2016-17 about 85% of first visits were conducted in the child’s home and 15% were conducted at school or in the community, including at restaurants (5%), public libraries (4%), public parks, places of worship, or community centers (3%), or at the child’s school (3%). A slightly higher proportion of second visits (89%) than first visits were conducted in the child’s home.

**Exhibit 7.** Location of First Visits



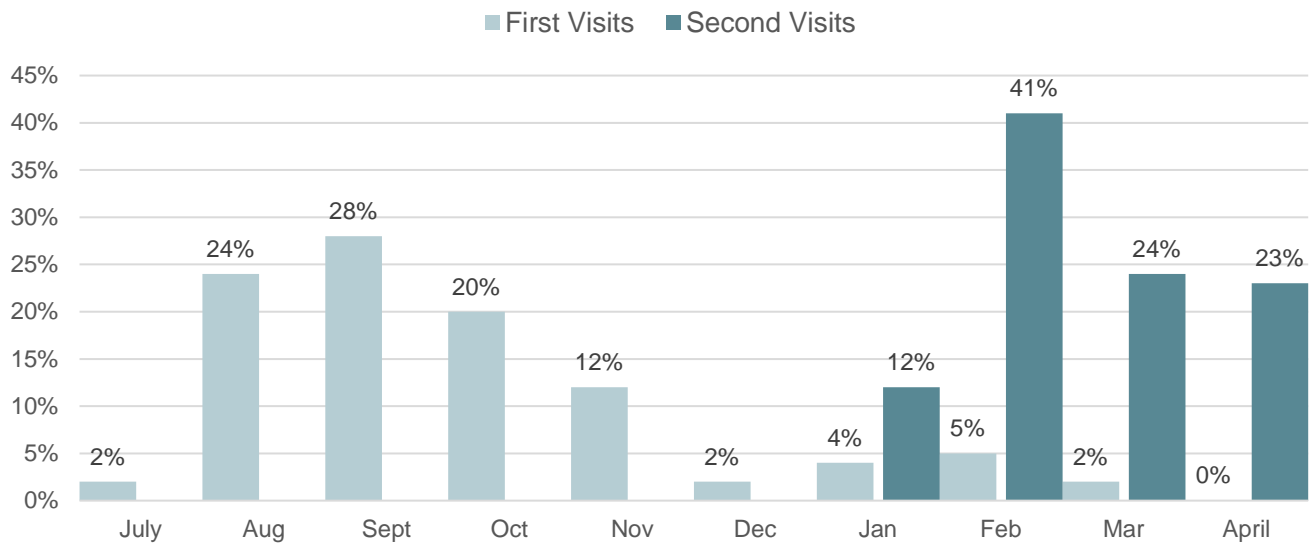
### Timing of Visits

Teachers and other school staff were also given general guidance on when to initiate first and second visits with their students and when visits should conclude. Although specific program timelines were negotiated on a school-by-school basis, program guidelines suggest that teachers should begin visiting families during the summer months, whenever feasible, or upon immediate completion of the first visit training. Schools should ideally conclude first visits within the first three months of the school year. Teachers were instructed to initiate second visits beginning in January and to conclude all second visits by March prior to standardized testing.

Exhibit 8 on the following page shows the distribution of first and second visits by month of the school year. For schools implementing the standard model, only about 74% of first visits, and 62% of second visits in 2016-17 were completed within the targeted timeline. This indicates that a substantial portion of all visits were conducted too late in the school year to have the maximum impact on family engagement or student school performance. Several of the lowest performing schools, in terms of number of students served, did not initiate visits until October.



**Exhibit 8.** Timings of First and Second Visits by Month



### Child Present at the Visit

Another expectation communicated to school staff was for the student to be present during the visit and to be actively engaged in sharing and goal setting activities. In 2016-17, in about 96% of all first visits and 98% of all second visits, the child was present in accordance with program guidelines.

In about one-quarter of all visits (24%), families also had younger children under the age of 5 living in the household. The total number of younger siblings was estimated at nearly 400 children, thus, further expanding the program's reach. Teachers reported sharing information with these families to promote early learning, including discussing developmental milestones, engaging in early literacy activities, and sharing resources with families to help promote children's early learning and positive development.

### Completing First and Second Visits

Completion of first and second visits is the core component of the HOME WORKS! 2 + 2 model. Each of the two home visits has a distinct purpose and orientation, with first visits focusing on relationship building and second visits focusing on academic growth.

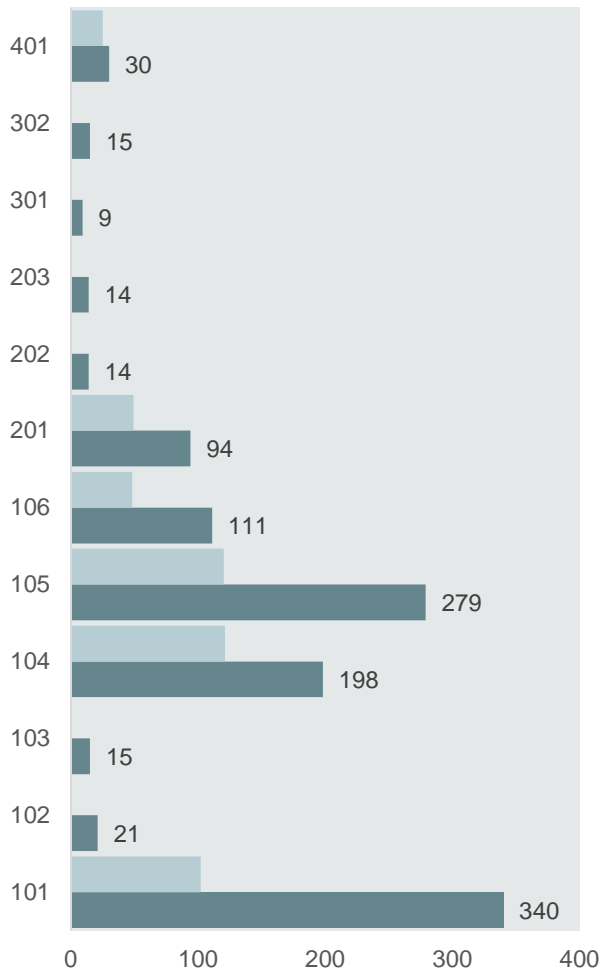
Accordingly, students and families must participate in both visits to receive the full benefit of the intervention. The HOME WORKS! organization established a program objective for schools to complete second visits with at least 50% of all families visited as a measure of program performance.

#### Objective 3

Complete second home visits with at least 50% of HOME WORKS! families to discuss students' academic progress and to reinforce parenting practices related to education.

Exhibit 9 on the following page compares the total count of students who received a first visit in 2016-17, with the total count of students who also received a second visit. Online teacher logs completed across schools show that of the 1,140 students in 2 + 2 schools who received first visits, 465 students received a second visit within the same school year. Similar to patterns of teacher, student and family participation, rates of second visit completion varied considerably across schools.

**Exhibit 9. First and Second Visits**



Notably, almost half of all schools participating in the program, including two elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools failed to complete any second visits with families. Across schools with at least some second home visits recorded, the percentage of students who received both visits ranged from 30 to 83%. In all, less than half of all students (41%) across HOME WORKS! schools received both visits, thus, missing a core component of the intervention where teachers discuss students' academic progress, and provide tools and strategies to promote learning in the home. This figure fell below the minimum 50% target for completing second visits with families.

When home visitors were surveyed at the end of the school year, they were asked if they had encountered any challenges completing the second series of visits with families. Half of all respondents (50%) confirmed that they had faced difficulty meeting second visit expectations. When asked to share some of the reasons that completing second visits was challenging, teachers most frequently noted that parents did not perceive a need for a second visit and were unwilling to participate (48%), or that scheduling conflicts and time constraints (36%) were more of a barrier later in the school year. A few respondents noted that parents preferred parent-teacher conferences in place of second home visits. The relatively low second visit completion rate in most schools has been an ongoing challenge for HOME WORKS! schools and raises questions regarding whether second visits to the home are an optimal way of delivering the full intervention, or if other options should be evaluated as alternatives.

### Home Visit Focus on Attendance

As a new priority for the 2016-17 school year, the HOME WORKS! administrative team introduced a new strategy for addressing issues related to attendance and chronic absenteeism among students. Teachers were provided a template for sharing classroom information about each child's pattern of attendance for the current school year. Teachers were also asked to record information about their communication with parents around the attendance issue.

According to online visit logs, teachers shared attendance information with families in 42% of all first visits, regardless of whether attendance was identified as an area of need. As noted in a previous section, only about 7% of students who participated in first visits had attendance issues or concerns. When information about attendance was shared with parents, in most instances (83%), parents indicated that they were aware of the problem. There were several explanations offered parents for why their children struggled to attend school or attend school on time. The most common reason was a lack of transportation (20%), often resulting from students oversleeping and missing the bus. Parents also noted that they were often unavailable to bring students to school (15%) either due to work schedules or other conflicts. Other challenges identified by families included student health issues (13%), truancy (11%), and the need to care for younger siblings (6%). Among those with identified needs, a plan for addressing the attendance issue was discussed in 83% of first visits.

## Family Dinner Attendance

Another core component of the standard model is the family dinners. Family dinners are hosted by schools twice throughout the school year to increase parent engagement and foster positive parent-teacher and parent-school relationships. Families who receive home visits are invited to participate as part of their involvement in the program. Families of students enrolled in active HOME WORKS! classrooms who have not yet agreed to a teacher home visit are also encouraged to attend.

An objective established by the HOME WORKS! organization was for each school to sponsor two family dinners to communicate to families that parent engagement is welcomed, valued, and expected. During the 2016-17 school year, six elementary and middle schools hosted two family dinners according to the program design. The two high schools hosted one family dinner each, according to their program plans. The one remaining elementary school and two middle schools failed to implement the second dinner.

Across all schools, a total of 1,492 teachers, students, parents and other family members attended the first series of family dinners, and another 1,354 attended second dinners. Dinner attendance at each event ranged anywhere from 24 to nearly 500 attendees, including school staff and volunteers.

### Objective 4

Sponsor two family dinners at each school to communicate that parent engagement is welcomed, valued, and expected, and to reinforce parenting practices that support student learning.

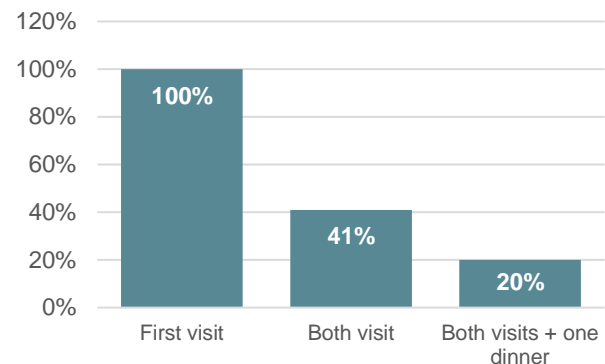
Parents who attended family dinners were asked to complete a brief survey at the end of the event to provide feedback on their experience. There were 205 parents or other family members who completed the survey form. When asked for feedback, 98% of survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that their participation made them feel welcomed and more connected to their child's school. Eighty-eight percent of parents or family members surveyed believed that attending a family dinner had strengthened their relationships with their child's teacher. Parents also agreed (75%) that the family dinner had benefitted them by showing them ways to support their children's learning.

98%

of parents stated attending a HOME WORKS! family dinner made them feel more welcomed and more connected to their child's school.

A measure of program fidelity established by the HOME WORKS! evaluation team was the percentage of students whose families received both first and second visits, and who also attended at least one family dinner. This provides a minimum threshold for the number and percentage of program participants exposed to the core components of the full intervention.

**Exhibit 10.** Percentage of Students Participating in Both Visits and At Least One Family Dinner



As shown in exhibit 10, only 20% of all students and families served through HOME WORKS! schools received the full program intervention, defined as two visits and one family dinner. Again, this percentage varied across schools, ranging from 38% of students receiving the full intervention in one high performing school to 0% receiving the full intervention in lower performing schools. This finding raises concerns regarding the feasibility of implementing the full program model for many schools, and may point to the need for more extensive program monitoring and support to help remove barriers to implementation and ensure that schools are on track to meet expectations for program involvement.

## Identifying and Removing Barriers

To learn more about the reasons that schools may have struggled to implement the full program model, teachers and other school staff were asked about the barriers and challenges they encountered when attempting to complete home visits with families. Teachers were presented with a list of challenges and were asked to indicate how significant each challenge was for them personally. Exhibit 11 below lists these challenges in order of the percentage of home visitors who rated each challenge as either an ‘extremely significant’ or ‘very significant’ barrier to implementation:

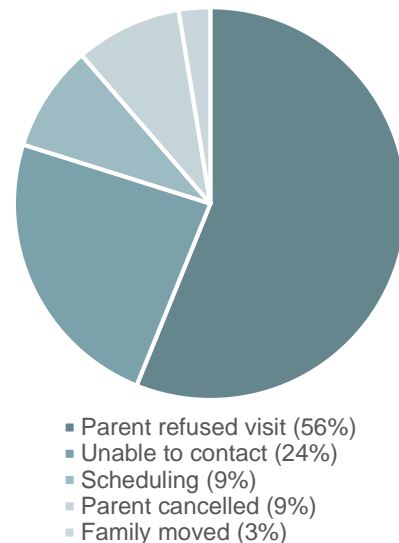
**Exhibit 11.** Barriers to Implementation

Barriers & Challenges	%
Difficulty scheduling a convenient time for a home visit	72%
Difficulty convincing families to participate	69%
Too much of a time commitment	56%
Families’ distrust or reluctance to engage during the visit	40%
Parents not showing up for a scheduled visit	31%
Too much data entry and record-keeping	31%
Too much distance to travel	24%
Concerns about personal safety	20%
Difficulty finding a location that was comfortable for the family	18%
Not feeling like visits were making a difference	18%

The most significant barriers identified by teachers related to the difficulty of engaging families in the home visit process. Nearly three-quarters of all teachers and staff surveyed (72%) reported encountering challenges scheduling a convenient time for a home visits, and 69% had difficulty convincing families they contacted to accept the home visit invitation. Further evidence of these challenges is found in online logs completed by teachers. Specifically, there were 80 attempts to schedule a first visit recorded in the home visit log in 2016-17 that did not result in a completed visit. More than half of all failed attempts were due to parent refusals as shown in exhibit 12. On average school staff contacted families 2-3 times before ending the attempt.

“I expected that the parents would be more willing to have us visit their homes. However, the parents I contacted either did not return calls or emails, or stated that they did not want to participate in the program.”

**Exhibit 12.** Reasons Visits Were Not Completed



About one-third of all teachers and staff (31%) surveyed also noted that parents not showing up for a scheduled visit was a major barrier to implementation. In the 2016-17 school year, there were 87 no shows recorded in the online log for first and second visits combined. No shows occur when the home visit team prepares for the visit, contact the family on the day of the visit and arrive at the home on the scheduled date, but the family is either not home or declines the visit. No shows account for about 6% of all attempted first visits and 3% of all attempted second visits.



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When asked to evaluate their own success in meeting personal expectations for completing visits with families, about 40% of all lead visitors reported reaching 'fewer' or 'far fewer' students than they had intended at the outset of the school year. Lead visitors who indicated that they were less successful than anticipated (n=22) were asked to share perceptions of why they visited fewer students and families than initially planned. The reasons offered by lead visitors included having less time available to conduct visits than initially anticipated, encountering greater difficulty contacting parents and encouraging them to accept visits, having difficulty coordinating with other teachers, setting unrealistic expectations for how many visits could reasonably be completed, and finding that students and families had lower than anticipated needs for visits, for example, in schools where parents were already highly engaged in school activities and were often present on the school campus. One school staff member cited concerns about safety risks in students' home environments as being the reason for conducting fewer visits than planned.

# Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Home Visit Outcomes

Although the focus of the 2016-17 evaluation was on assessing school implementation, the HOME WORKS! evaluation was also structured to capture feedback from parents, teachers and other school staff to document their perceptions about the impact of home visits on family engagement and student educational outcomes, and to gather feedback on areas in need of improvement. This section summarizes data from online visit logs and surveys of teachers and parents who were active in the program.

## Ingredients of a Successful Home Visit

On year-end surveys of teachers and other school staff, respondents were asked to identify what they felt were the most important elements or 'ingredients' of a successful home visit. The intent was to understand what aspects of home visits teachers believed were most effective in supporting parent engagement and school success. Of the responses provided (n=47):

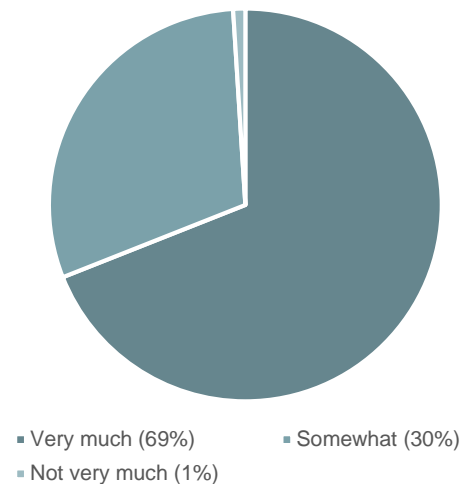
- Twenty-one percent (21%) focused on the resources that teachers bring to the home as part of their visits. Specific resources mentioned included the Cradle-to-Career poster and information connecting families with resources in their communities.
- Seventeen percent (17%) of responses highlighted the importance of conducting visits in a safe, comfortable, and non-threatening environment. Teachers felt strongly that the informal setting of visits contributed to more authentic and open conversations and helped to cultivate trust between teachers and family members.
- Eleven percent (11%) referenced the importance of sharing personal success stories about the child, the ability to make personal connections with the family, and the importance of listening, and engaging in dialogue.
- Nine percent (9%) focused on the value of providing updates to families on the child's school progress.
- Other ingredients mentioned included having opportunities to learn about families and to engage in goal setting with the parent and child.

## Teacher Perceptions of Parent-Teacher Relationships

Teacher visits logs were also used to capture teachers' observations about the quality of their interactions with the families they visited. The first teacher home visits focus almost exclusively on relationship building and cultivating trust between teachers and families to open lines of communication. Although many schools struggled to reach as many families as initially planned, teachers did perceive positive impacts from their interactions with those who they visited.

Notably, almost all teachers who conducted first visits with families (99%) in 2016-17 perceived that visits helped to strengthen their relationships with parents either 'very much' or at 'least somewhat'. This percentage exceeded the targeted objective for home visits to strengthen parent-teacher relationships with at least 80% of families.

**Exhibit 13.** Teachers Perceptions of Impact



When later asked on teachers' surveys about the perceived impact of HOME WORKS! on the families who participated, 65% of home visitors either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that home visits had increased parent engagement, and 75% agreed that visits had improved parents' attitudes toward school.

**99%**

**of teachers believed that teacher home visits strengthened their relationships with families**

## Parent Perceptions of Home Visit Impacts

The HOME WORKS! evaluation also aimed to capture the perceptions of parents in schools served by the program to gather feedback on their home visit experience. Parents who attended family dinners and who also received a home visit from their child's teacher (n=141) were asked to respond to a series of questions regarding the perceived impact of teacher home visits on their relationships with teachers, their orientations toward school, and any improvements in their child's school performance that they attributed to their home visit participation.

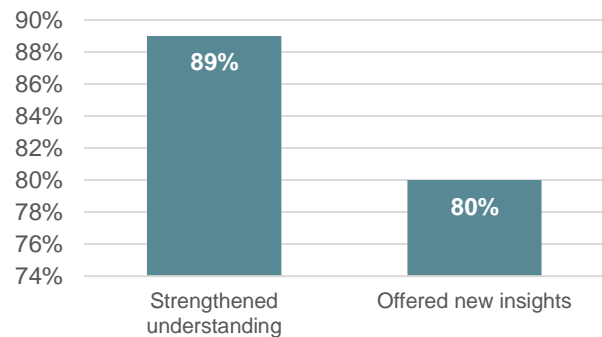
- Nearly all parents surveyed (94%) 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they now had a more positive relationship with their child's teacher as the result of home visits.
- Seventy-nine percent of parents (79%) agreed that they had become more involved in their children's education.
- More than 80 percent (83%) agreed that they communicated more frequently with teachers regarding their child's progress in schools, and
- Eighty percent (80%) agreed that their child has shown improvement in his or her school performance, in areas such as attitudes, attendance, homework completion, or grades and test scores.

## Modifications to Instructional Practices

An intermediate outcome of the teacher home visit model is to create opportunities for teachers to learn more about the students and families they serve and to use this information to inform their teaching practices.

When teachers and other school staff were asked about the impact of the home visit experience, about 89% of lead visitors believed that their interactions with families had helped them understand more about their students' culture and home life. Eighty percent (80%) believed that home visits had given them new insights they could use to inform their teaching practices. Respondents were also asked to provide specific examples of how they modified their teaching approach to better address student needs based on lessons learned through the home visit experience. Among home visitors surveyed, several themes emerged highlighting how teachers changed the ways they interacted with students in the classroom (n=27).

**Exhibit 14.** Teacher Perceptions of Home Visit Impacts on Teaching Practices



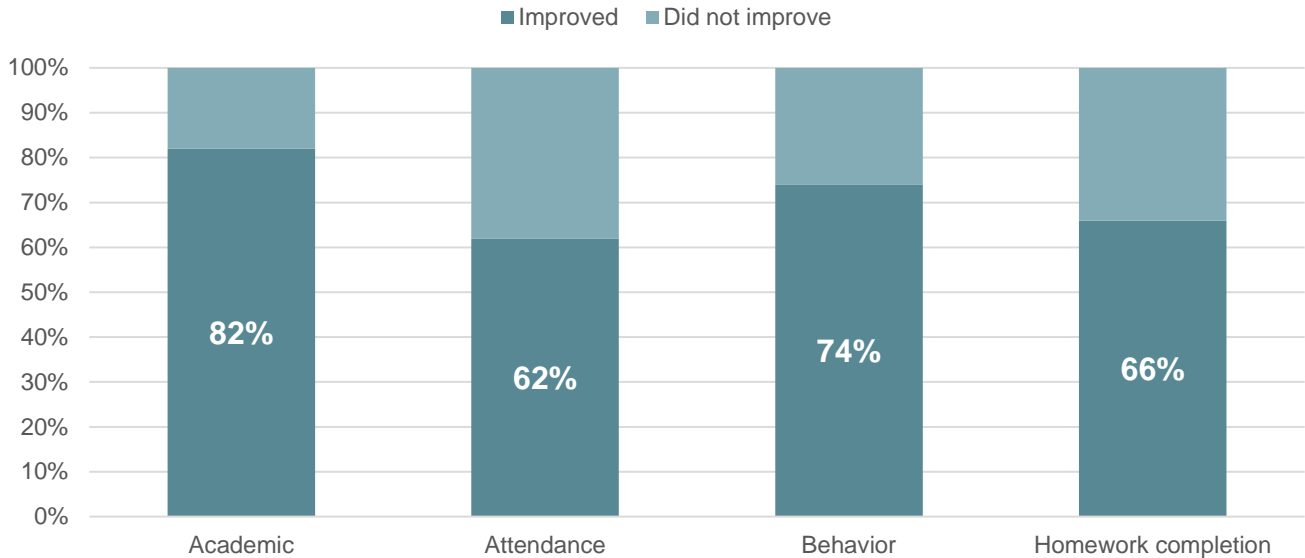
These changes in practices included individualizing instruction or making accommodations, as needed, based on a better understanding of student needs (33%), adopting new attitudes toward students and families after learning more about the challenges in their home lives (26%), identifying and removing barriers to learning, such as lack of access to technology or inadequate school supplies (15%), integrating student cultures and interests into classroom instruction (11%), and better recognizing family strengths (7%).

## Impacts on School Performance

Ultimately, the goal of HOME WORKS! is to increase parent and teacher engagement as a strategy to improve students' school performance. For students who participated in second visits, teachers were asked to assess student needs in areas targeted by the program, including academic achievement, attendance, homework completion, and classroom behavior, and to assess whether students had shown improvements over the course of the school year. More than half of students who received second visits (53%) were identified with academic needs, about a quarter (27%) exhibited conduct or behavioral problems, and 19% had issues with homework completion. Fewer students were identified with concerns related to school attendance or tardiness (6%).

For students who were performing below grade level academically (n=247), teachers indicated that 82% had shown some improvement over the course of the school year. Teachers also noted improvements among 74% of all students who had exhibited behavioral issues in the classroom, 66% of those who had trouble completing homework assignments, and 62% of those who had problems with school attendance.

Exhibit 15. Teacher Observed Improvements in School Performance among Students Receiving Second Visits



### Needs for Additional Support

Surveys administered at the end of the school year were also used to gather feedback from teachers regarding any needs for additional support, as well as recommendations for how the HOME WORKS! program could be further strengthened. When asked to identify anything that the school or HOME WORKS! could have provided in terms of communication or added support that might have enhanced the home visit experience, or increased the program’s overall success, ten survey respondents offered feedback.

Suggestions included initiating visits earlier in the school year or in the summer to allow more time to complete visits, maintaining greater consistency and momentum throughout the entire school year, building capacity within the school building to train staff, and transitioning to electronic forms, as the use of a hard-copy binder seemed outdated to staff and made it more difficult and time consuming to reproduce materials, especially when translating into different languages. Additional suggestions included offering further training on how to log home visits in the online portal, and minimizing paperwork and documentation requirements, which were perceived to be not very user-friendly.

Two respondents expressed frustration that the students they were assigned were not students that they teach, and that this detracted from the overall experience. One also felt that parents of students whose teachers were not participating had difficulty understanding why, suggesting a need for stronger communication.

**“It was helpful to try to cover as many students as possible, but with neither myself or the assisting staff member work with those children on a daily basis, it was not as effective or meaningful for the student or parents.**

### Strengthening HOME WORKS!

Finally, teachers and other staff who conducted home visits were asked if there was anything about the program that they felt could be strengthened. Teachers identified both suggestions for improvement and aspects of the program that they felt worked well. Suggestions for improvement included offering incentives to teachers who had the most home visits, assisting teachers with scheduling visits, offering additional training, including training regarding the technology component of logging home visits, and involving more school administrators in home visits with teachers. One teacher felt that communication could also be improved, specifically noting the fact that dates and expectations were frequently changing. Several teachers communicated their appreciation for the program’s flexibility, which allowed them to structure visits with families according to their own plans, while others noted that having a script was useful to for guiding conversations with families.



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## Findings and Recommendations

The 2016-17 HOME WORKS! evaluation focused on assessing the quality of implementation across a diversity of school settings, including one early childhood education center, eight elementary schools, three middle school and two high schools. Seven schools implemented the standard 2 + 2 elementary school model, five schools implemented the 2 + 2 secondary school model, and two schools implemented Parent-Teacher Learning Teams (PTLT).

The purpose of the evaluation study was to document how the program was implemented and how implementation varied across schools, as well as to assess the extent to which schools achieved fidelity to the standard program model by successfully implementing core components that are linked to program outcomes. The evaluation was also used to document parent and teacher perceptions about the impact of the home visit experience on students, families, and schools, and the extent to which home visit implementation helped schools achieve their intended outcomes of more effectively engaging parents and students in the learning process. The 2016-17 evaluation effort builds on previous implementation studies in preparation for a more rigorous randomized controlled trial (RCT) funded by the U.S. Department of Education that will assess student academic and behavioral outcomes resulting from home visit participation. The following are key findings that emerged from the evaluation study with accompanying recommendations for program refinements.

**HOME WORKS! was very successful in recruiting high need schools and districts into the program and establishing school-community partnerships to increase parent engagement and reduce educational disparities.** Nearly all schools active in the program were Title 1 schools serving very high percentages of socio-economically disadvantaged youth. School administrators and school staff were also very successful in reaching students with demonstrated needs for support and intervention. Specifically, about 42% of all youth served were performing below grade level academically and a quarter exhibited conduct or behavioral issues in the classroom. Schools were also successful in reaching high need student sub-groups within the school community, including English Language Learners (15%), special education students (10%), and students

and families experiencing homelessness (2%). This finding suggests that HOME WORKS! was highly successful in allocating scarce program resources to high need, harder-to-reach children and families who are most likely to benefit from the intervention.

**Both parent and teacher perceptions captured on surveys and in online logs provide strong evidence of the value of home visits for building positive relationships between teachers and families and promoting positive teaching and learning practices.** Teachers universally (99%) agreed that visiting students in their homes had improved the quality of their relationships with families either 'very much' or at least 'somewhat'. Two-thirds of home visitors agreed that home visits had also increased parents' engagement in the learning process, and three-quarters believed that home visits had helped families overcome negative orientations toward school. Teachers also reported that a substantial portion of their students who had identified academic or behavioral needs had demonstrated improvements over the course of the school year as the result of home visits participation. Parents also believed (94%) that opportunities to visit with teachers outside of the school setting had strengthened their relationships with teachers, and believed that home visits had helped their children achieve greater school success (88%).

**Despite an abundance of positive feedback highlighting the benefits of teacher home visits for teachers, students, families, and schools, in practice, most schools struggled to implement the HOME WORKS! program model effectively.** Project-wide schools completed visits with a little more than half of the number of students and families (55%) initially prioritized for participation, with only 4 of 14 schools achieving their priority student goal. Less than half of those who participated in first visits went on to receive second visits (41%) within the same school year, and only 20% of students received the minimum program intervention, defined as participating in two visits and attending at least one family dinner. In several schools, core program components, including second visits and second family dinners, were never implemented. By contrast, a small number of high performing schools were successful in implementing all model components, and were able to reach hundreds of students within their school-buildings, creating a culture of positive parent engagement in their schools.

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Evaluation findings have demonstrated that engaging parents through home visits can be challenging and time consuming, and requires a significant level of commitment on the part of school administrators and participating school staff for programs to successfully achieve program expectations. The following are recommendations for steps the HOME WORKS! organization might take to further support school implementation efforts:

**Recognizing some of the challenges to implementing the program model as designed, HOME WORKS! should institute a more formal process for assessing ‘implementation readiness’ among recruited schools before formalizing partner agreements.** Schools should be vetted to ensure that the program model is aligned with the school culture and is responsive to the needs of the school community, that a substantial portion of the teaching staff is committed to the program and clear about expectations, and that the school administration is willing to champion the program within the school building to ensure its success.

**In addition to vetting schools based on ‘readiness’ to implement the program, the HOME WORKS! organization should institute a more formal, data-driven monitoring system and process for identifying poorly performing schools early in the school year, and intervening to provide needed support.** The implementation of a new online visit portal this school year with real-time reporting capabilities should serve a useful tool for facilitating performance monitoring and feedback. More formal processes for identifying and intervening with faltering schools should include steps to uncover and remove any unnecessary barriers to implementation noted by staff in surveys, such as unclear communication, challenges coordinating schedules with co-visitors, or issues with matching teachers with students in their own classrooms. These processes should also focus on monitoring program start-up to ensure that the momentum of staff training, which teachers viewed highly favorably, translates into immediate scheduling of home visits to help schools adhere to planned timelines.

**The HOME WORKS! organization should also consider alternative options for delivering components of the intervention, for example, in response to extremely low second visit completion rates.** Other teacher home visit programs have moved away from second visits due to low family participation, which may be an option for HOME WORKS! to consider. Future evaluation efforts planned for the current school year, which will assess the effectiveness of the PTLT model, may help inform program decisions in this area.

Overall, there is strong evidence to suggest that HOME WORKS! positively impacted parent-school connections in high need, underperforming schools, by helping teachers engage more meaningfully with the families of children they served. Parents and teachers held positive impressions of the program and believe in its mission, vision, and impact. The findings and recommendations presented in the evaluation report are a product of the program’s investment in continuous quality improvement of its structures and processes, with the goal of maximizing benefits to schools, and using program resources most efficiently to promote student and school achievement. While past evaluation efforts have focused largely on documenting individual perceptions of program strengths, challenges, and impacts through online logs and parent and teacher surveys, future evaluation activities should also focus on school-related factors that might promote or impede successful implementation at the school building level.