

# SCHOOL SUCCESS PARTNERSHIP (SSP)

by Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency (NEMCSA)

Region 5 • Alpena, Michigan  
nemcsa.org



Education • Literacy • Children • School • Whole Family Approach

## INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

A School Success Liaison meets with the parent(s)/guardian, child, teachers, and school administrators to develop and create a plan for student success. These plans address all areas of concern and include intervention strategies for school and home. School Success Liaisons make weekly student contacts and bi-weekly contacts with parent(s)/guardian, teachers and other community resources. Most importantly – **the program is designed to link families with resources and coordinate services when needed**, taking a two generation/whole family approach.

## LOCAL NEED ADDRESSED BY INITIATIVE

The Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency Inc.'s (NEMCSA) School Success Partnership Program (School Success) serves school aged children and youth from Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade who are at-risk for academic failure. School Success began approximately two decades ago in response to community awareness that school failure was a complex, multi-faceted issue linked to chronic poverty, unemployment, juvenile delinquency, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, child abuse and neglect, and a lack of parent education.

Students served by School Success experience a variety of issues and conditions that affect school performance and create barriers to academic success including family issues (e.g., divorce, unemployment, death, etc.), attendance issues, behavioral issues, transitional issues, and unmet mental health and/or medical needs. The program collaboratively works with students and their families, school administrators,



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As a result of participating in School Success, students are expected to have increased school attendance; improved academic performance; an increase in parental involvement with their child's education; and family barriers identified and removed for student success. School Success has become an integral resource for students, families, and schools in Northeast Michigan.

Issues addressed by this program: Academic Concerns, Attendance Concerns, Behavioral Issues, Family Issues: divorce, death, imprisonment, unemployment, economic hardship, Mental Health Issues, Substance Abuse, Abuse/Neglect, Untended Needs, Homelessness, and any factor that may have a negative impact on a child's successful learning experience.

## ROLE OF CSBG FUNDS

The agency uses CSBG program funds braided with other funding through the state and participating ISDs. CSBG funds are a critical piece of the funding infrastructure for SSP. Overall funding is \$1.8M. Currently, Public School Partnerships provide 50%, State of Michigan provides 29%, NEMSCA provides 16% of the funding, other funding is 5%.

## TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

The School Success Partnership began approximately two decades ago in response to community awareness that school failure was a complex, multi-faceted issue linked to chronic poverty, unemployment, juvenile delinquency, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, child abuse and neglect, and a lack of parent education. The most transformative impact is through SSP's consistent strategy of identifying barriers to attendance and success and connecting families with resources to reduce these barriers.

Once SSP liaisons identify barriers to a student's academic achievement, they utilize a team approach to resolve barriers and increase the student's ability to succeed in school. This team includes, and is not limited to; school personnel, the student, parent(s) and other community resources. The most common approach to resolving barriers involves creating a plan or system with the student and/or parent or guardian. The plans often consist of strategies that students and parents can employ to overcome barriers.

Information gathered through family meetings with SSP liaisons and associated skills are often used to support the plans collaboratively developed to assist students and families. SSP liaisons provide referrals

to help students and families resolve identified barriers that are beyond the scope of SSP. In the 2019-20 year this resulted in 3,984 Contacts with community agencies for clients, and 5,384 Barriers identified and alleviated with collaboration with the family.

Program strengths according to Program Participants:

- Communication with parents
- Building positive relationships with students
- Handling crisis situations
- Providing a much needed support
- Working with small groups and providing tools to help through challenging times

## EVIDENCE-BASED OUTCOMES

Highlighted impacts: In 2019-20, 99% of 713 formal and 2,516 informal participants experienced a reduction in chronic absenteeism, 5,293 barriers were identified and alleviated, including housing and food insecurity.

95% of consultations resulted in an Action Plan that supported improvement at home, 84% of the consultations resulted in a plan that assisted with Positive Behaviors in the home and/or classroom, and of the students with reported attention difficulties, 65% of those students had improved class seat time/attendance/improved attention skills.

## EQUITY LENS

The initiative collects data by different demographic groups that permit the analysis of its impact on different groups the community. In order to understand and the breadth and depth of the populations we serve, NEMSCA uses census data. It allows them to understand the counties served and their demographics to effectively determine which constituencies are most in need.

Poverty and the ability to successfully complete and advance education is linked, at all grade levels. 25.7% of the children in NEMSCA's service area are living in poverty, with Ogemaw and Roscommon County being the highest at 30% and 33%. According to an article on University of Michigan Poverty Solutions website titled Chronic Absenteeism of Homeless Children in

Michigan, “there are several key factors impacting a student’s ability to be successful in school: Chronic Absenteeism, Economic Instability, Homelessness and Race and Disability Status”(Erb-Downward, 1). So, to reflect, by helping the parents and guardians stabilize, not only do we stabilize them, we stabilize the next generation in one of the most significant milestones in preventing poverty.

## CUSTOMER VOICE

NEMSCA uses the Results Oriented Management and Accountability process to develop strategies to determine what response is best suited. Input of the tri-partite board members, particularly those who represent the customer voice, is vital to program design and course correction as needed. The Needs Assessment and very importantly, the customer satisfaction feedback surveys provide critical feedback for program direction. The feedback surveys help keep staff accountable for service delivery, give helpful suggestions for improvement and offers words of praise and encouragement.

- “Both of my children improved in behaviors through developed plans with the School Success Liaison, both at school and at home.” ~ Parent
- “All schools should have a school success program. It can help so many kids and so many parents who are having tough times.” ~ Parent
- “The strength of the school-home connection is fantastic. School Success is by far, the most impactful program offered in the school setting.” ~ Principal
- “The School Success Program is a quintessential part of the daily function of our elementary school. Our School Success Liaison, in collaboration with our staff, works diligently to remove any barriers a student might have in order to help our at-risk students achieve success both emotionally and academically. This program has also increased parent involvement within our school and out in our community. My sincere thanks to the School Success Program and all of their hard work!” ~ Principal

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## PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with the state of Michigan and the school districts have been an important part in the growth of the program. 100% of school administrators recommend this program to colleagues in other districts, which has been key to the SSP’s growth, in addition to the agency’s ability to collect key metrics and communicate those to legislators year after year.

## Contact

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