2018-2019

Sprout Initiative Final Report

Your Way Home Montgomery County

Villanova University,
Department of Public Administration

VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

Dear Community,

From 2017 – 2018, Your Way Home Montgomery County in partnership with HealthSpark Foundation began a journey to better understand how to more effectively prevent homelessness from occurring in our community. This journey culminated in the report, Unlocking Doors to Homelessness Prevention: Solutions for Preventing Homelessness and Eviction, researched and written by Barbara Poppe and Associates. One of the most impactful recommendations made in this report was to launch a school-based prevention program to stabilize housing for school children who are imminently at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness. To highlight the need, Your Way Home found that over a quarter (28%) of all people experiencing homelessness in Montgomery County are children ages 0-17, with the large majority of those children being African American. Given the long-term negative consequences of homelessness on children, it was the strong recommendation to develop a pilot project in one school district in Montgomery County with a high number of homeless children identified under the McKinney-Vento Act, with programs and supportive services creating opportunities for and addressing needs of both children and the adults in their lives together.

A local family foundation saw the innovation and potential for investing in this pilot, as well as the importance of supporting research and outcome analysis as a framework for promoting sustainability. Thus, the Sprout Initiative was launched in the 2018 – 2019 academic school year in partnership between Your Way Home, Villanova University, Keystone Opportunity Center, and North Penn School District. In this report, you will find a summary of programmatic lessons learned, outcomes, and potential for future impact. Additionally, you will find sound research of the link between stabilizing housing for children in order to increase their lifelong learning potential, as evidenced by Villanova University's robust literature review and development of a theory-to-practice, replicable new metric to measure the impact of housing stabilization on an elementary student's academic achievement and potential, called the ARMHIS.

Most importantly, however, is the local impact this pilot had for children and their families. By breaking down the silos between the education system and the housing/homeless service system, Your Way Home and our partners were able to provide participating children and their families with stable housing, where they could focus on the family, instead of worrying about having to move from house to house constantly or where they would sleep from day to day.

We want to thank our partners in this project, for whom this would not be possible. Thank you to the anonymous foundation for the private investment. Thank you to Keystone Opportunity Center for its expertise in housing. Thank you to the staff, teachers, administrators, and counselors in the North Penn School District for the supports you offer students and their families. We are also deeply grateful for the time and efforts of our two Villanova MPA students, Tolu Omodara and Lisa Howdyshell, who went above and beyond and contributed in so many ways to the evaluation of the Sprout Initiative. Their commitment to excellence and dedication to the project were what made the evaluation a success.

We look forward to sharing this report with you and partnering in our work to expand the Sprout Initiative across Montgomery County.

In partnership,

Tara Gaudin
Director, Montgomery County
Department of Health and Human Services

Lauren Miltenberger, Ph.D.
Department of Public Administration
Villanova University

Table of Contents

Your Way Home Montgomery County: Sprout Initiative Final Report

Villanova University, Department of Public Administration: Best Practice & Literature Review: Increasing Educational Attainment via Housing Stability Research Scan for Your Way Home's Sprout Initiative

Villanova University, Department of Public Administration: Your Way Home Sprout Initiative Data Collection & Methodology Report

Villanova University, Department of Public Administration: Interim Evaluation Report, The Sprout Initiative, Your Way Home Montgomery County

Villanova University, Department of Public Administration: Increasing Educational Attainment via Housing, Stability: A Final Review of the Sprout Initiative

Sprout Initiative Final Report

Project Timeline

January 2018
Funding secured for pilot through anonymous private foundation

March-May 2018
Planning & development began. Scope, policies, procedures, & evaluation methodology developed.

June 2018
Launch of Sprout Initiative

October 2018
Expansion of target population to include all McKinney-Vento households . Villanova finalizes its Data Collection & Methodology.

January - March 2019
Villanova collects & analyzes data

April 2019
New Referrals into the Sprout Initiative ceased

May 2019
Villanova interim report is delivered, showing baseline data

June 30th, 2019
Official programmatic end of Sprout pilot

September 2019
Final Villanova evaluation report delivered

Sprout Initiative: School-Based Homelessness Prevention

The Sprout Initiative was a pilot project launched in Academic Year 2018 in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. The Sprout Initiative was designed to increase vulnerable children's educational achievement by stabilizing their families' housing. The project targeted school-aged children whose families were imminently at risk of homelessness as identified by the school's McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons. The project provided housing stability services for the family, while coordinating school-based support for the child in order to increase key educational outcomes. Housing stability services included case management and financial assistance to the family, primarily in the form of the Rapid Re-Housing program model (housing location, short to medium-term financial assistance, and connections to supportive services). The program used a 2-Generation approach to coordinate care holistically for parents and children. The ultimate goal of the Sprout Initiative was to improve a child's lifelong learning potential and school success by stabilizing their housing.

This project is the result of a cross-system partnership between the following organizations in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania:

- North Penn School District
- Your Way Home Montgomery County PA-504 CoC
- Keystone Opportunity Center
- Villanova University

The Sprout Initiative was designed to address the significant impact that housing displacement has on children, including the effects on their educational achievement and lifelong learning potential. The program was informed by local data, and national research and programmatic models for homelessness prevention among school-age students. The following points were particularly important to the project's development:

- During the 2015- 2016 school year, 683 school-age children in Montgomery County were considered homeless or imminently at risk of homelessness.[1]
- Children who experience frequent housing moves, school moves, and homelessness are likely to have less academic success, including lower grades and lower attendance rates, than children who do not experience these hardships[2].

[1] 2017 Eviction Research Project Overview. Barbara Poppe and Associates. Available at www.YourWayHome.org.
[2] Siemer Institute 2016 Program Evaluation.

- Many families with children that are housing unstable are living with others out of economic necessity, often in crowded sleeping environments or having to split up siblings and parents between different guest households. This doubled-up or split-up housing happens frequently after experiencing a forced move from their own housing. [3]

- The majority of funding for homeless services is limited to serving those who meet the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition of "literal homelessness," which is restricted to families and individuals who are living outside, in cars, or in emergency shelters. Therefore, families temporarily living with others out of economic necessity are typically not eligible for most homeless service programs that can provide move-in and temporary rental assistance, and other supports.[4]

The Sprout Initiative expands upon the work of Your Way Home Montgomery County to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. The program was designed to reflect the overarching values and principles of Your Way Home, including:

- Progressive engagement: Consumers are given just as much services and support as they need to succeed, in order to preserve costly interventions like subsidized housing for the families with significant and lasting barriers to housing stability. Case managers rely first on the client's own resources and networks to solve financial crises, and to use system resources only as needed.

- Housing first: Housing first is the philosophy that people need a safe, stable place to sleep before they can take advantage of the community, health, and financial services that they may need to prevent future housing instability.

- Client choice: Consumers are provided options and recommendations that guide and inform their choices, as opposed to rigid decisions about what they need.

The Sprout Initiative was a groundbreaking partnership between the homeless service and education sectors, philanthropy, and research institutions. The program included the following basic components:

- North Penn School District identified and engaged families for the program based on risk of homelessness and its effect on children's educational achievements. North Penn administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers provided on-site supports for children and parents in coordination with the social service partner.

[3] Gathered from data collected via Your Way Home's call center and 2-1-1 data.
[4] A comparative listing of the various definitions of "homeless" under federal departments that fund services for children can be found here: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/homelessness_definition.pdf

- Keystone Opportunity Center provided social services (housing stability case management and direct financial assistance) to families in the program.
- Your Way Home served as project implementation lead, and provided ongoing program management. The Your Way Home public-private partnership provided seed funding for the project with generous support from a local anonymous family foundation.
- Villanova University provided research support and conducted the evaluation for the program through a thorough literature review and development of a new metric entitled "the Annotated Research Measures for Homelessness Initiatives in Schools" (ARMHIS) to evaluate the effect of housing stability on students' educational achievement and lifelong learning potential.

Housing & Program Outcomes

Number of families identified as potential program participants: 51 households, consisting of 85 school-aged children, were on North Penn School District's McKinney-Vento list as of 5/1/2019.

Number engaged: All eligible households were offered Sprout assistance.

- 1 household directly declined to participate in the Sprout Initiative.
- Other families were not enrolled due to
    - Initial Ineligibility (above 50% Area Median Income)
    - Lost contact with the household
    - Household's choice to permanently live outside of school district
    - The household self-resolved prior to Sprout enrollment

Number enrolled: 22 households, consisting of 40 school-aged children in the North Penn School District, have been enrolled in Sprout.

- Note: there were 11 pre-school aged children within these households as well. These pre-school aged children received case management services, such as referrals to Head Start or Early Head Start as appropriate.

Number housed: 15 households (21 school aged children) stabilized their housing situation through the support of Sprout.

- 11 households (13 school aged children) moved into new places with a new lease.
- 2 households (3 school aged children) were able to stay in their home through eviction prevention assistance (paying off back rent owed).
- 2 households (5 school aged children) were able to make their temporary housing situation (doubled up with other people) more tenable and long-term without the use of

financial assistance. This was achieved through case management and connections to supportive services, including child care, food security, physical, mental and behavioral health, employment and job training, public benefits access, financial counseling, budgeting, and mediation services.

Number exited: 7 households (19 school aged children) were exited from Sprout unsuccessfully due to loss of contact or inability to find affordable housing in North Penn School District.

Evaluation on Educational Outcomes

The findings included in the Villanova University evaluation of the Sprout Initiative was comprised of an assessment of academic outcomes of the participating Sprout students over the course of the entire academic year 2018-2019. Villanova University research team completed:

1. Literature Review

A literature review which included both an objective investigation of the existing research and the best practices used by the Siemer Institute to identify the indicators and metrics that can be used in the study to assess educational outcomes of homeless or at-risk children.

2. The Development of the Annotated Research Measures for Homelessness Initiatives in Schools (ARMHIS)

The Annotated Research Measures for Homelessness Initiatives in School (ARMHIS) was created from Villanova University's understanding of the best practice model used by The Siemer Institute and a synthesis of the empirical research on the most effective measures to assess the impact of housing on educational achievement.

Nineteen metrics under four output dimensions were identified and determined to contribute towards educational achievement and lifelong learning potential, which are: (1) Individual disposition, (2) Intellectual functioning; (3) Social competence; and (4) Family enablement.

Individual Disposition	Intellectual Functioning	Social Competence	Family Enablement
Increase in attention	Increase in literacy skills	Decrease in verbal aggression	Increased school attendance
Improved self-control	Capacity for independent work	Decrease in physical aggression	Increased interest in school
Confidence and assertiveness	Improved memory	Improved relationship with teachers	Decreased tardiness
Motivation to succeed		Improved relationship with peers	Participation in recreational activities
		Capacity for cooperative learning	Decrease in disruptive school moves
		Decreased disciplinary incidents	Positive relationships with adults

3. Findings and Recommendations of the Sprout Program

Villanova University followed eighteen (18) elementary-aged school children, of which seven (7) were coded as "housed" in new permanent housing locations. With the cohort of assessed students being so small, generalizability is limited at this time.

Many ARMHIS metrics were already being collected by the North Penn School, but data for only ten (10) of the original nineteen (19) metrics were available for the study. Students were assessed across these metrics by the school via BAME expectation measures: Beginning, Approaching, Meets, or Exceeds in the mid-year and again at the end of the school year.

Of the seven students who were housed, 71 percent met expectations in at least seven of the ten metrics, while only 45 percent of those who were not housed attained the same standard. This was an improvement upon the midterm results when only 50 percent of those who had been housed met this standard, and 60 percent of those who were yet to be housed did.

Meeting Expectations in at least 7 of 10 metrics

	Midterm	End of Year
Housed	50%	71%
Unhoused/non-rehoused	60%	45%

During school midterm, unhoused/non-rehoused students actually performed better than housed students. Yet by the end of the school year, a higher percentage of housed students performed better. While the data is too small to generalize, this **suggests that re-housing may initially be disruptive for children, but eventually results in better long-term educational outcomes and lifelong learning potential.**

Client Success Stories

1. Mom/Dad/1 child (elementary school age). The child has autism and the parents reported how difficult it was to manage the family dynamics while in a hotel. They were the first family that was housed through Sprout and because they entered a low income housing situation-they took over paying in rent in full the next month. It has been 8 months now and they have not had any issues with their housing or paying rent.

2. A Mom & Dad with several children had been living in hotels for several months before they were enrolled in Sprout. Funds were used to pay move-in costs and several months of subsidy until the family secured full time jobs and took over paying rent in full. This family would have ended up in an emergency shelter if they did not have Sprout assistance. They are all doing very well at this time and have acclimated to the new neighborhood.

3. Mom/Dad/2 kids (one elementary school, one age 5-not yet in school but has autism and other special needs). They reported they were in hotel for almost a year and it was extremely difficult. Family is on fixed income and although able to pay hotel with minimal assistance, they never would have had the funds for move in costs. In addition, after getting housed, dad had to have knee surgery. He is recovering but has expressed his gratitude for the program because "if I had to do the recovery from this surgery in a hotel room…it never would have happened". He has in-home care/rehab services and needs space to be able to do the occupational therapy needed. The family later emailed Stephanie Flamer at Keystone Opportunity Center: "…we are beyond grateful for the assistance. We were in a hole we never thought we'd get out of and with your help it gave us a fighting chance. There's no way we could ever repay you but to say thank you. Thank you to all involved in helping us and not just tossing us aside as a lost cause."

Lessons Learned & Key Takeaways

1. The Sprout model, which is a school-based homelessness prevention pilot, is best understood as a local, community-based program which helps support neighbors and residents in need. The unique, individualized needs of families experiencing housing instability & homelessness in their own community are best responded to & understood by households experiencing homelessness and the providers who know & serve their local community well. Therefore, a Sprout model is most effective when there are invested local partners at the table. Local schools, neighbors, landlords, municipality officials, community members, and social service professionals should all be invested and participatory in program operations, communication, and development of intervention & support strategies. Future iterations of Sprout should have more local community partners at the table, particularly local landlords & property managers, working together towards a clear mission.
2. School Districts do not have any current financial incentive to identify or support students who are experiencing homelessness, however are opening themselves up to legal action if they do not comply. While the U.S. Department of Education requires schools to report McKinney-Vento numbers, and the law requires schools to provide additional transportation & education services to children experiencing homelessness, there is no additional funding provided by Federal or other government entities to fulfill these obligations. In fact, the more students who are identified, the more money from the school's tight budget must be spent (particularly for the transportation). Therefore, it is important that local organizations, policy makers, and funders

develop the financial incentives to support school districts in providing additional supports to families experiencing homelessness.

3. There is a continued need for better landlord engagement and retention for the program, as Sprout is unique in that its purpose is to re-house families in the community where they already live. A dedicated Housing Locator whose role is to develop strong relationships with landlords is crucial to success, especially with a program that is concentrated in a specific geographic area.
4. The families that were not housed (exited because they failed to stay in touch, find anything viable, etc.) were the larger families with more children. Any family with 3 or more children in need of a 3, 4, or more bedroom apartment found it difficult to locate anything in the North Penn School District that they would be able to afford without long term financial assistance.
5. The flexibility of the Sprout Initiative offered a very person-centered approach that allowed the providers to respond to the unique needs of families identified as experiencing homelessness under the McKinney-Vento Act. We developed the initiative with the intention of using the Rapid Re-Housing model for all families referred. In practice, a variety of interventions were needed depending upon the family's unique situation, including diversion and traditional prevention assistance. Thanks to the flexibility of private funding, the program was able to tailor the type of assistance to each family.
6. Homelessness as identified under McKinney-Vento is extremely fluid and complex. Identifying, verifying, referring, and engaging these families in order to offer a housing intervention looks very different compared to a coordinated entry process targeting HUD definitions of homelessness. Further exploration on best practices in identification, referral, and prioritization for families on the McKinney-Vento list is warranted.
7. As reported by North Penn School District, the McKinney-Vento list predictably works in a cycle during the school year: the list starts off with a low number of families at the beginning of the school year, and then increases as the school year goes on, with the highest numbers by the end of the school year. A stronger database that would allow for data-mining, in order to better understand this trend, would be extremely beneficial.
8. Investment in resources and personnel for the school is important to continue to break down silos between the education and housing/homeless service system. Connecting students and their families experiencing homelessness to housing support should not be another unfunded mandate that burdens already overwhelmed school administration and staff. By embedding a dedicated housing focused case manager/housing support specialist within a school, the expertise can be offered in-house.
9. Continued research and evaluation is needed to monitor the effects of housing stabilization services on a child's lifelong learning potential. While the Villanova University evaluation is promising, the cohort is too small for generalization and the longer-term effects of housing stabilization on educational achievement is yet unknown.

10. Like all housing and homeless services, an equity lens needs to be embedded from program design, to input, to partnership, to evaluation. In 2018, 18% of all individuals experiencing homelessness were black children. Homelessness prevention programs, such as the Sprout Initiative, should target these disparities. Partners should not only examine rates of student mobility, but how race, historic discrimination, implicit bias, and other factors affect the educational and housing stability of families in the community.

Next steps

These findings and the use of the ARMHIS will be shared via various roundtables throughout Montgomery County. If you are interested in learning more about the Sprout Initiative, please contact us via www.yourwayhome.org/contact-us.

Your Way Home Montgomery County is actively seeking continued funding and partnership support for the launch of Sprout 2.0.

Appendices

1. Best Practice & Literature Review: Increasing Educational Attainment via Housing Stability Research Scan for Your Way Home's Sprout Initiative, Villanova University, Department of Public Administration
2. Your Way Home Sprout Initiative Data Collection & Methodology Report, Villanova University, Department of Public Administration
3. Interim Evaluation, The Sprout Initiative, Your Way Home Montgomery County, Villanova University, Department of Public Administration
4. Increasing Educational Attainment via Housing Stability: A Final Review of the Sprout Initiative, Villanova University, Department of Public Administration

Best Practice & Literature Review:
Increasing Educational Attainment via Housing Stability
Research Scan for Your Way Home's Sprout Initiative

Villanova University
Department of Public Administration

Lauren Miltenberger, Ph.D.
Tolu Omodara
Lisa Howdyshell

July 31, 2018

I. Introduction

The Sprout Initiative is a pilot project created by Montgomery County's Your Way Home program to increase vulnerable children's educational achievement by stabilizing their families' housing. Your Way Home is partnering with the North Penn School District to analyze and assess the impact that participation in their housing program can have on student educational success. This project is targeting elementary school-aged children whose families are imminently at risk of homelessness. In addition to providing housing support services to the families via Your Way Home's programming, the Sprout Initiative will also coordinate educational support for the children in order to increase key educational outcomes. The ultimate goal of the Sprout Initiative is to assess the impact that stable housing can have on educational outcomes for vulnerable students.

The purpose of this research scan is to provide an objective investigation of both the extant research and the best practices used by the Siemer Institute to identify the indicators and metrics that can be use in this study to assess educational outcomes of homeless or at-risk children. The Siemer Institute for Family Stability is a national program and best practice collective impact network providing funding and technical assistance for programs working at the intersection of homelessness and education. The main objective of this report is to provide recommendations from this review on metrics that can be collected by the Sprout Initiative to assess how well children are doing in school. In addition, our intention is to review the metrics from the research and best practice literature and then discuss with Your Way Home and North Penn School District staff how to best integrate these findings with data that is already being collected by the School District. This report provides you with the key findings from both our literature review and best practice review with the key informants.

Review of the Literature

Method/Process of Articles Selection

The overall impact the Sprout Initiative seeks to achieve is improvement of the select children's academic and school success through two main outcomes, namely: (1) Increase in the children's educational attainment; and (2) increase in the children's lifelong learning potential. To identify the relevant literature for this purpose, we had to first determine the output dimensions that can contribute to these outcomes, and we selected four, which are:

1. Individual disposition;
2. Intellectual functioning;
3. Social competence; and
4. Family enablement.

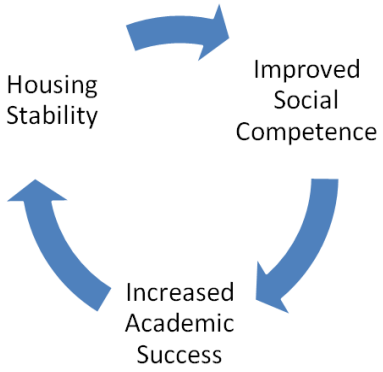
In other words, we had hypothesized that provision of housing to homeless children helps improve their individual disposition, intellectual functioning, social competence and family's capacity to enable them; all of which would in turn increase their educational attainment and lifelong learning potential. Having articulated the chain of causality and articulated our hypothesis, we went on to identify articles that could either validate or nullify the latter. The articles that we reviewed are listed in the attached Research Collection Template being sent to you as an addendum to this report.

Social and Academic Competence

The majority of the articles selected (Malecki & Elliot, 2002; Welch, 1998; Chan et al., 2008; Moore, 2013; and Bowman et al., 2012;) were an inquiries into the relationship between social and academic competence, and this was relevant for us because we had hypothesized that housing stability would lead to improved social competence which will in turn enhance academic success. Our review of the research posited that prosocial behaviors are a significant predictor of academic competence and achievement. According to our review, indicators of these prosocial behaviors included: Cooperation; Assertion; Empathy; Responsibility; and Self-Control. In addition, that social competence may be both cause and effect of academic competence. It however appeared that social and academic competence begin to become reciprocally related to each other in the later years, i.e., in 2nd and 3rd grade, rather than 1st grade. We used the articles to assess their findings and place indicators or measures that correlated to the four dimensions discussed above, Individual disposition, intellectual functioning, social competences and family enablement.

The Housing Connection

In addition, we reviewed research on the connection between housing supports without which the causality cycle would be incomplete.



We included a review of the research (MacDonald, 2012) on how housing instability impacts educational attainment using four housing variables, namely:

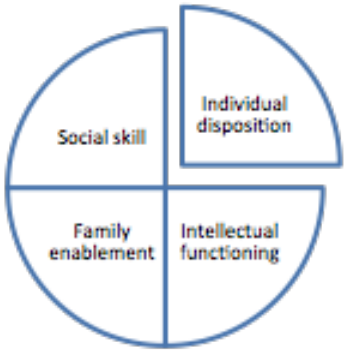
1. Housing quality;
2. Residential stability;
3. Availability of affordable housing; and
4. Neighborhood location.

‘

The report also discussed common methodological challenges with studies on this topic, namely the problem of correctly handling control variables, and the difficulty in differentiating the above four housing variables and their impacts on educational outcomes. In addition, this study also observed from their study that better parenting may be related to better self-control in children, which moderates the risk of academic problems. This corroborated our hypothesis that housing stability will improve the family’s enablement of the children, which will in turn enhance the child’s academic and school success.

Results of the Literature Review

In addition to corroborating our hypotheses, we also elicited specific outcome metrics from these articles under the four dimensions we had earlier identified.



We called these proposed dimensions and metrics the:

Annotated Research Measures for Homelessness Initiatives in Schools (ARMHIS).

Proposed Metrics and Dimensions

S/N	Individual Disposition Dimension	Intellectual Functioning Dimension	Social Competence Dimension	Family Enablement Dimension
1.	#/% of children showing increase in attention	#/% of children showing an increase in literacy skills	#/% of children demonstrating decrease in verbal aggression	#/% of children with increased school attendance
2.	#/% of children demonstrating improved self-control	#/% of children developing capacity for independent work	#/% of children demonstrating decrease in physical aggression	#/% of children with increased interest in school
3.	#/% of children developing confidence and assertiveness	#/% of children with improved memory	#/% of children with improved relationship with teachers	#/% of children with decreased tardiness
4.	#/% of children with increase in motivation to succeed		#/% of children with improved relationship with peers	#/% of children participating in recreational activities
5.			#/% of children showing capacity for cooperative learning	#/% of children with disruptive school moves
6.			#/% of children with decreased disciplinary incidents	#/% of children developing positive adult relationships

The significance of this research is that in ARMHIS we have created a new and composite categorization of outcome measures for school-based homelessness initiatives. Due to the fact that these indicators are multi-dimensional, these measures are also robust and thus present a holistic view of the intervening factors between housing stability and academic achievement. The benefit of this is that researchers and policy-makers can have identifiable measures that indicate whether or not the child is making progress toward academic improvement after the housing intervention. This is important because it may not be realistic to measure progress at the earlier stage through improvement in subject grades. Our literature review has however demonstrated that these proposed metrics are predictors of subsequent subject grades.

III. Key Informant Interviews

The purpose of our key informant interviews was to discuss and learn about Siemer Institute's Family Stability Initiative metrics and process for gathering program outcomes. The Siemer Institute is a national best practice model of a collective impact network working at the intersection of homelessness and education in about fifty communities across the United States. We selected the site of Arizona as our point of contact. The Arizona project was particularly relevant to us because it was the first time they had a government municipality on board, similar to Your Way Home's involvement in this school-based homelessness initiative. The interviews were conducted with three individuals involved with school-based homeless educational programs in Arizona.

Measures and the Need for Flexibility

The Siemer Institute has three outcome areas for the programs they support nationwide, namely: housing stability; financial stability; and educational stability. Nevertheless, although Siemer Institute as the sponsor gave case managers program measures, they were also given flexibility to identify the children's most dire needs and adopt the most relevant metrics. The case managers facilitated goal setting between children and parents based on these needs, and supported both to work together towards the goals and target-measures. The Siemer Institute requires that grantees identify three specific outcomes as related to school-based achievement:

1. Children who set the goal to reduce the frequency of disciplinary incidents and achieve this outcome
2. Children who move to a higher level of enrollment and attendance on the children's education dimension of the Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix (which focuses only on enrollment and attendance at school)
3. Children who set the goal to improve their grades by a mutually agreed upon amount and achieve this outcome.

Parental & Teacher Involvement in Educational Stability Measurement

Certain goals and measures, like those on the financial stability outcome area, mainly concern the parents. However, goals on the educational stability outcome area are a quadripartite agreement among the parent, child, teacher and case manager. Parents are also involved in measuring progress on these goals, and case managers do most of the tracking. Case managers have an office in school, and a teacher liaison officer/supervisor through whom they engaged with the rest of the teachers. They also engage regularly with the school psychologist; and endeavor to maintain a good relationship with the principal.

Key Lessons

In conclusion, based on their four-year experience, the case managers emphasized the need for flexibility during implementation. According to them, their program had evolved, benefitted from experimentation, and the journey continues. They also emphasized need to partner effectively with the school district, noting that it is a good thing if the schools see the program as a tool to help them achieve their own goals. This makes them generally more supportive, particularly when case managers need to be in schools to give prompt interventions to children requiring it.

IV. Summary & Conclusion

The purpose of this report is to provide Your Way Home's Sprout Initiative with guidance and support on the metrics and outcomes needed for its pilot project with the North Penn School District. To that end, our research team reviewed the literature and completed key informant interviews. In this process, we have created the ARMHIS dimensions and outcomes metrics matrix and identified the three school-based outcomes required by the Siemer Institute. The ARMHIS dimensions and metrics provides a comprehensive review of the specific indicators of success for the Sprout Initiative to use to assess the Your Way Home's student's educational outcomes. We look forward to working with both Your Way Home and North Penn School District staff to identify data collection measures to incorporate in the pilot project with a focus on using measures already being collected and a discussion on the introduction of new metrics.

References

Bowman, D., Dukes, C., Moore, J. (January 2012). Summary of the State of Research on the Relationship Between Homelessness and Academic Achievement Among School-Aged Children and Youth. Retrieved from https://nche.ed.gov/downloads/nche_research_pub.pdf

Chan, A., Hinz, E., & Heistand, D. (2008, March). Housing Stability and School Success for Children: The Effectiveness of the Kids Collaborative Project. Retrieved May 15, 2018, from http://rea.mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/2008_aera_-_housing_stability_and_school_success_of_chlidren_03-27-2008_4.pdf

MacDonald, M. (2012). Housing as a Platform for Improving Educational Outcomes for Low-Income Children. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.

Malecki, C. K., & Elliot, S. N. (2002). Children's social behaviors as predictors of academic achievement: A longitudinal analysis. School Psychology Quarterly, 17(1). doi:http://dx.doi.org.ezp1.villanova.edu/10.1521/scpq.17.1.1.19902

Masten, A., Fiat, A., Labella, M. & Strack, R.A. (2015) Educating Homeless and Highly Mobile Students: Implications of Research on Risk and Resilience. School Psychology Review. 44(3).

McGah, J., Saavedra, E. (2015). Homelessness and Education Cross-system collaboration: Applied Research Summary and Tools. Retrieved from https://nche.ed.gov/downloads/res-summ-cross-system.pdf

Moore, Jan (April 2013). Resilience and At-risk Children and Youth. Retrieved from https://nche.ed.gov/downloads/resilience.pdf

Seimer Institute 2016 Program Evaluation. (2017).

Welsh, M., Parke, R., Widaman, K., O'Neil, R. (1998). Linkages between children's social and academic competence: A longitudinal analysis. Journal of School Psychology. 39(6).

Your Way Home Sprout Initiative
Data Collection & Methodology Report

October 1, 2018

Villanova University
Department of Public Administration

Lauren Miltenberger,Ph.D.
Tolu Omodara
Lisa Howdyshell

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide Your Way Home's Sprout Initiative with guidance and support on the metrics and data needed for its pilot project with the North Penn School District. The literature review and key informant interviews from the first phase of the project led us to identify key variables and measures to include in this proposed data collection methodology. This report includes (1) the data elements needed to measure the program outcomes as created via the Annotated Research Measures for Homelessness Initiatives in Schools (ARMHIS), (2) assessing the current data tracked by the North Penn School District in its databases as related to ARMHIS, and (3) identifying additional data elements to be tracked via focus groups conducted during the pilot in order to measure the program's outcomes.

The Sprout pilot project includes two different populations in its samples, the school children impacted by being housed in Your Way Home programs and a second population that includes the teachers, counselors, and administrators of the program. For the sample of the school children, the research question guiding our work is how does housing impact their school and learning experience? To answer this question, the research team will rely heavily on the data collected by the teachers using the recommended variables from ARMHIS. These include a holistic perspective on social, academic and family variables. The second population included in the study are those school teachers, counselors and administrators involved with the children. From their perspective, the research question is the same as for the children, that is we are asking how does housing impact the school experience. In addition, we ware also seeking to answer any process improvement issues before the program is rolled out to more schools.

Data Collection: Variables to assess performance of school children

The variables we identified for each of the determined dimensions (individual disposition, intellectual functioning, social competence and family enablement) were elicited during our research scan. They focus on social and academic competence and will impact each dimension that has an influence on a child's educational attainment and lifelong learning, which are the basis of the Sprout Initiative.

Metrics are currently being collected by North Penn School District using the Elementary Progress Report Card (EPRC), Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP) and MTSS Action Plan. Your Way Home is also collecting data using the Family Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (F-SPDAT). In determining the variables to use to assess performance, a comparison of what is being collected and what was recommended was completed. The attached excel sheet highlights the fourteen out of nineteen ARMHIS variables that the North Penn School District is currently already collecting that we will use to assess the children's social and academic performance. A discussion will take place with the North Penn School District and the Your Way Home program administrators to determine if and how to collect data the remaining variables.

Data Collection: Variables and methods to assess how Teachers, Administrators, Counselors, view the program

In addition to collecting the variables on the assessment of school performance, we designed two sets of data collection instruments to answer the research question focusing on quality improvement and school performance from the perspective of the teachers, counselors and administrators. These are: surveys and focus group sessions. The surveys will generate quantitative data and the focus group questions would generate qualitative evidence, examples of our survey and focus group questions are included below. We also developed five versions of the surveys/focus group questions for five sets of respondents namely: Teachers; Parents; Counselors; Administrators; and Case Managers.

Suggested Focus Group Questions for Sprout Initiative's Case Mangers

Part I

1. How did you begin the process of learning about this program and participating in this pilot study?
2. What has the process of working with the children been like so far? Any comments to share or lessons learned to discuss?
3. What lessons have been learned so far from working with the parents?
4. How would you describe the process of working with the school, community, research and Montgomery County partners?
5. Between the start of school year and now, have you observed any changes in the ability of the children to be successful in school?

Part II

6. The Sprout Initiative is a model that should be implemented in other school districts.
   Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. The collaborative arrangement between partners is working well.
   Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. The data being used to assess the children is feasible to collect and valid in that it is evaluating key indicators of school performance.
   Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. Are students showing signs of increased educational and social performance since being in the Your Way Home program?
   Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Part III

10. If you could change anything about the Sprout Initiative, what would it be?

11. What are things that are working well in this pilot program?

Conclusion & Next Steps

We intend to engage further with the North Penn School District and other stakeholders to discuss the data methods, collection procedures, as well as suitable dates for administering these instruments. We expect that an effective communication and engagement process will lead to a productive data collection process. Subsequently, during the month of January 2019, we would use these instruments to gather data and analyze data for the 6-month progress report. This report will highlight preliminary outcome trends of the academic and social performance of the students and suggest any programmatic improvements for the second half of the school year.

VILLANOVA
UNIVERSITY
IGNITE CHANGE. GO NOVA.®

Interim Evaluation Report
The Sprout Initiative
Your Way Home Montgomery County

Prepared by:

Lisa Howdyshell
Tolu Omodara
Lauren Miltenberger, Ph.D.
Villanova University
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Department of Public Administration

May 6, 2019

Introduction

The Sprout pilot program of Your Way Home Montgomery County launched in the beginning of the 2018-2019 academic year with a number of families achieving housing stability by December of 2018. The findings included in this interim evaluation of the program comprise an assessment of academic outcomes of the participating students as well as findings on the coordination of its operational activities amongst the primary partner agencies, North Penn School District and the Keystone Opportunity Center. The data from the school district is from the second marking period therefore the close proximity of this data to the date of being housed provides us with limited evaluative capacity to claim large gains in educational impact of housing on student performance. However, it does provide a baseline of information, trends in data and a general assessment of the students' school success measures to share with Your Way Home at this time.

The evaluation of the impact of housing on school success factors for the participating students was completed by a review of a majority of the recommended variables from the Annotated Research Measures for Homelessness Initiatives in Schools (ARMHIS). As reviewed in the Data Collection & Methodology Report, the variables include a holistic perspective on social, academic and family enablement measures. The second population included in the study is schoolteachers, counselors and nonprofit administrators involved with the Sprout families and two focus groups were convened to collect data with these stakeholders. The purpose of including this second aspect of the evaluation was to identify any process improvement issues before the program is rolled out to additional schools.

The views expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Montgomery Country Office of Housing and Community Development or the Your Way Home program.

Findings

Evaluation of Elementary School Students

The elementary school students, who were the initial focus of the Sprout Initiative, were assessed based upon the ARMHIS metrics. Eighteen of the students were assessed using the data and reports provided by the North Penn School District, and the scale of each metric ranged from Beginning Expectations (B), to Approaching Expectations (A), then Meets Expectations, (M) and Exceeds Expectations (E). All data reviewed are included in the Appendix attached to this report. Certain measures that were originally identified as being included in reports provided by the school district could not be assessed using the metrics provided. In addition, two family enablement metrics will be collected at the end of the assessment cycle in the final report to allow for ease of collection and the ability to provide for more time to measure these variables since these are not baseline measures.

None of the eighteen students exceeded expectations in any of the ten ARMHIS metrics that the data was available for in this interim review. At least ten of the eighteen students (about 50 percent) were meeting expectations in eighty percent of the metrics assessed (eight out of ten). One of the metrics in which only 33 percent of the students met expectations is Attention, and it would be interesting to note if we have a higher percentage of students meeting expectations in this metric in the next assessment. In addition, in the next assessment report, we will also be including in the review the percentage of students that are meeting expectations in, at least, eighty percent of the metrics.

Meanwhile, although a total number of eighteen elementary school students have been enrolled into the program, only seven – less than 40 percent – have been housed. Of the seven children who have been housed, at least, 50 percent met expectations in seven of the ten metrics, while more than 60 percent of those who are yet to be housed met expectations in seven of the ten metrics. Two of the metrics that those who have been housed performed least in are Attention and Independent Work; while the two metrics the unhoused children scored lowest in are Attention and Improved Memory.

Middle and High School Students

The chart included in Appendix B reflects the overall summary of the academic achievement of the middle and high school students that are participating in the Sprout Initiative. The individual assessment of each student is included in Appendix A. There are limited metrics

for this population of students as (1) the research scan focused on housing and elementary school students; (2) the school district does not capture the same behavioral data for this population; and (3) they were added to the Initiative after it had started. Since the total number of classes taken each marking period differs for each student, the student's grades have been averaged. For comparison purposes, the grading has been broken into three categories: above average (80-100), average (77-79) and below average (76 and below). Of these participants, two are receiving average grades in that area, three below average and three above average.

Evaluation of the Sprout Program

The second purpose of this interim report is to review the program implementation effectiveness from the perspectives of the North Penn School District and the Keystone Opportunity Center. Two focus group sessions were held, the first with staff at the Keystone Opportunity Center and the second with teachers, administrators and social workers from the North Penn School District. The results of the focus group sessions are reported below in aggregate with the findings condensed into the below four main points.

1. Partners are completely vested in this program and are determined to make it a success

First and foremost, partners were in complete agreement that they were committed to the success of this program and that they were willing to do whatever it takes to support the families and see the successful implementation of this and future Sprout programs in other communities.

2. *Children in the Sprout program are performing well at school*

The discussion on the development of the children in the program was positive, with stories being shared on how the children contributed to their respective classroom learning communities.

3. Sprout families have a unique set of characteristics

The Sprout program is supporting a different population of families than the Keystone Opportunity Center normally supports in the Your Way Home program in Norristown, PA. The families targeted for the Sprout program are at-risk of becoming homeless and have different issues and needs from that of homeless families. Therefore, there is a need to discuss the particular needs of this group and how to best provide them information on the program.

4. Synergies developed amongst partners created via continual learning

The focus group discussion provided insights on how the development of this new partnership was created by way of learning about each other's roles in the program and leaning on each other's strengths to facilitate communication and coordination. With any new collaborative, creating the connections to make the sharing of information is hard work and based on the forming of relationships. The connections created across the Sprout system were developed to enhance the sharing of data across all partners. One interesting finding in this regard is the different roles that each partner plays in the process and how he or she have worked to create connections to share information and learn from each other. School administrators and nonprofit staff recognized that many stakeholders played key roles, like the teachers, which was expected. Others played roles that were not initially expected, for example, the office staff and other support staff who were in charge of attendance and real-time information sharing that social workers needed so they could connect with the families.

Interim Recommendations

The expertise of all partners involved and the commitment by all to the successful implementation of the Sprout program was a clear finding from this interim evaluation. For the future implementation of the Sprout program next year, we offer two recommendations to continue to build on the success of the pilot program.

1. Your Way Home may want to consider facilitating a process to help with the transfer of the ARMHIS metric data from the partners. This recommendation focuses on the possibility of Your Way Home working with the North Penn School District and Keystone Opportunity Center to streamline the process of gathering the data from the reports cards and other reports.

2. The Your Way Home program may want to consider hosting a summer training session with all partners to build on the success of the first year of the collaboration.

- At the summer training session, items for discussion could include:
  - The session can include an overview of the process and policy map and how it connects to the different objectives of the program: purpose, goals, needs of the families, data collection strategies, and the collaborative framework

model. In addition, meeting schedules and deadlines for all targeted interventions and data collection can be set at this time.

- At this session, partners may want to work together to brainstorm ways to discuss how to review the Sprout program with new families. One idea is to provide scripts for the school social workers and the Keystone Opportunity Center program administrators to use to communicate all aspects of the program with families.
- We also suggest that all of this information can be placed in a Sprout Initiative Handbook to be shared with all partners and staff which will also include names, contact information, position information, program information discussed above, etc. This may result in the inclusion of job descriptions/role descriptions for each partner to provide programmatic and collaborative guidelines.

Conclusion

This interim evaluation report of the Sprout program pilot initiative discussed three major findings of the Sprout program in addition to providing recommendations for the future. The first is that we now have a baseline of data from the schools on the majority of variables included on the ARMHIS to use for further assessment and evaluaiton of the program at the end of the school year. In addition, we have included middle school and high school students in this evaluation as a new population involved with the Sprout program and used their grades as the only assessment measure to review their performance. Lastly, the focus group sessions confirmed the commitment of both partners to the successful implementation of the Sprout program and the interest in continuing to work together to achieve positive outcomes for the students and their families participating in the Sprout program.

Appendix A – Full Review of School Data

Please see attached excel spreadsheet with the full data analysis review of the elementary school students performance based on the ARMHIS metrics as well as the individual review of the middle school and high school data from their report cards.

Appendix B – Middle and High School Summary

Student	Total # of Classes	Average GPA	Notes
1	9	87	Creative, shows improvement, needs more self-control
2	11	78	Pleasure in class, capable of better work, poor test scores
3	7	74	Positive influence, puts forth good effort, does not do homework, inconsistent on tests
4	8	85	Contributes to discussion and positive influence
5	7	77	Not working to expectation, improve study habits, remediation needed
6	10	73	Student is failing English and Health
7	*14	81	Student actively participates in 3 classes, 5 classes in jeopardy of failing and 1 class does not participate
8	8	76	Puts forth good effort, pleasure in class, absences interfere with progress

Increasing Educational Attainment via Housing Stability: A Final Review of the Sprout Initiative

Villanova University

Department of Public Administration

Prepared by:

Lisa Howdyshell

Tolu Omodara

Lauren Miltenberger, Ph.D.

The views expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Montgomery County Office of Housing and Community Development or the Your Way Home program.

Introduction

In January 2014, Your Way Home Montgomery County was established as the county's unified housing crisis response system for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. Your Way Home uses a collective impact framework to bring together cross-sector partners from government, the non-profit sector, philanthropy, businesses, community groups, and residents to develop a shared agenda toward ending homelessness, align activities to mutually support the shared agenda, and create a common set of metrics for evaluation.

Your Way Home embraces a "housing first" approach to ending homelessness by first helping people find or maintain permanent housing and then connecting them with community, health, human, and financial services they need to prevent future experiences of homelessness. During the 2018-2019 school year, Your Way Home began a School-Based Homelessness Prevention Program, "Sprout." The focus of this program is to serve families who are at imminent risk of homelessness and provide housing support and services before they are in a housing crisis. The Sprout model of housing services includes move-in and rental assistance to stabilize families' housing, as well as case management to support families in accessing the community supports needed to maintain housing stability long-term. Additionally, the initiative was designed to more closely align the case management services offered to families with the counseling and other school services provided to vulnerable children to improve key educational outcomes. The purpose of Sprout was to create a holistic housing service model that cares for both family and child, empowering them with the resources they need to thrive in their lives and in school. The pilot program aimed to serve 10-15 households over the course of the school year.

Your Way Home designed the Sprout program using a collaborative model by partnering with the North Penn School District and the Keystone Opportunity Center, Inc. for referral, educational support and case management services. The ultimate goal of our evaluation of the first year of the Sprout program is to assess the impact that stable housing can have on educational outcomes for vulnerable students.

The findings included in this final evaluation of the program comprise an assessment of academic outcomes of the participating Sprout students over the course of the entire academic year 2018-2019. In addition, this report includes a summary of the work completed over the course of the evaluation study as well as a final section on a few lessons learned and recommendations for the future. The report card data from the school district included in this report is from all three marking periods. However, we would stil llike to stress the fact that the close proximity of this data to the dates of being housed provides limited evaluative capacity or

a strong causal argument to claim large gains in educational impact of housing on student performance. However, it does provide a baseline of information, trends in data and a general assessment of the students' school success measures to share with Your Way Home at this time.

Beginning in June of 2018, the research team commenced work on this evaluation study of the Sprout program. Over the course of the past 15 months we have completed the below:

1. Literature Review

   A literature review which included both an objective investigation of the extant research and the best practices used by the Siemer Institute to identify the indicators and metrics that can be use in this study to assess educational outcomes of homeless or at-risk children.

2. The Development of the Annotated Research Measures for Homelessness Initiatives in Schools (ARMHIS)

   The Annotated Research Measures for Homelessness Initiatives in School (ARMHIS) was created from our understanding of the best practice model used by The Siemer Institute and a synthesis of the empirical research on the most effective measures to assess the impact of housing on educational achievement.

3. Findings and Recommendations from the Interim Report

   The Interim Report included report card data from the first two marking periods of the school year as well as recommendations on the collaborative design elements of the program.

4. Final Report on the Evaluation of the Sprout Program

   The final report, included below, includes report card data from all three marking periods as well as a final discussion section on lessons learned and the future of Sprout.

Guiding Principles and Activities of the Sprout Evaluation Study

The overall impact the Sprout Initiative seeks to achieve is improvement of the select children's academic and school success through two main outcomes, namely: (1) increase in the children's educational attainment; and (2) increase in the children's lifelong learning potential. To identify the relevant literature for this purpose, we first determined the

output dimensions that can contribute to these outcomes, which are: (1) Individual disposition, (2) Intellectual functioning; (3) Social competence; and (4) Family enablement. In other words, we had hypothesized that provision of housing to homeless children helps improve their individual disposition, intellectual functioning, social competence and family's capacity to enable them; all of which would in turn increase their educational attainment and lifelong learning potential. The culmination of our literature review produced specific outcome metrics under the four dimensions we had earlier identified. We call these proposed dimensions and metrics the Annotated Research Measures for Homelessness Initiatives in Schools *(ARMHIS)* see Table 1 below.

Proposed Metrics and Dimensions

S/N	Individual Disposition Dimension	Intellectual Functioning Dimension	Social Competence Dimension	Family Enablement Dimension
1.	#/% of children showing increase in attention	#/% of children showing an increase in literacy skills	#/% of children demonstrating decrease in verbal aggression	#/% of children with increased school attendance
2.	#/% of children demonstrating improved self-control	#/% of children developing capacity for independent work	#/% of children demonstrating decrease in physical aggression	#/% of children with increased interest in school
3.	#/% of children developing confidence and assertiveness	#/% of children with improved memory	#/% of children with improved relationship with teachers	#/% of children with decreased tardiness
4.	#/% of children with increase in motivation to succeed		#/% of children with improved relationship with peers	#/% of children participating in recreational activities
5.			#/% of children showing capacity for cooperative learning	#/% of children with disruptive school moves
6.			#/% of children with decreased disciplinary incidents	#/% of children developing positive adult relationships

(Table 1: ARMHIS)

ARMHIS provides a new and composite categorization of outcome measures for school-based homeless reduction initiatives. Due to the fact that these indicators are multi-dimensional, these measures are also robust and thus present a holistic view of the intervening factors between housing stability and academic achievement. The benefit of ARMHIS is that researchers, school and housing administrators and policymakers can have identifiable measures that indicate whether or not the child is making progress toward academic improvement after the housing intervention. This is important because it may not be realistic to measure progress at the earlier stage through improvement in subject grades.

Once we identified the measures in ARMHIS and discussed them with the school district partners, we were pleased to discover that the vast majority of them were being collected already by the school via report cards and other reports. This was a key finding in and of itself, a veritable theory to practice moment, which also provided validation and buy-in from the North Penn School District officials that our research was indeed on the right

track. Measures included in ARMHIS are currently being collected by North Penn School District using the Elementary Progress Report Card (EPRC), Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP) and MTSS Action Plan. Your Way Home is also collecting data using the Family Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (F-SPDAT).

Findings

Final Evaluation of Elementary School Students

As was done for the interim report which serves as the baseline, the elementary school students enrolled in the Sprout Initiative program were again assessed vis-a-vis the ARMHIS metrics, for this final report and the scale of each metric ranged from Beginning Expectations (B) to Approaching Expectations (A), then Meets Expectations, (M) and Exceeds Expectations (E). The eighteen students who were evaluated through the midterm results were also assessed now. The data of an additional student was provided but largely excluded from the analysis to maintain accuracy. In order to maintain a consistent measure of the impact of housing on school achievement, we used the seven students who were housed as at the time of the interim report as housed as of the end of the school year.

From the data available for the Individual Disposition, Intellectual Functioning, and Social Competence Dimensions, as with the period reviewed for the interim report, none of the students exceeded expectations in any of the metrics during the period reviewed for the final report. However, the proportion of students meeting expectations in the Attention metric of the Individual Disposition Dimension has increased from 33 percent to 38 percent. Similarly, the share of students meeting expectations in, at least, 80 percent of all the metrics assessed has increased from about 50 percent to 83 percent.

Seven of the eighteen students met expectations in a higher number of metrics in the final results than in the midterm results, while five met expectations in the same number, suggesting that twelve of eighteen had improved or, at least, not deteriorated since their enrollment into the program. Of the six who met expectations in a lower number of metrics in the final results than in the midterm results, 67% were unhoused, implying that the lack of housing probably impacted their performance negatively.

Of the seven who have been housed, 71 percent met expectations in, at least, seven of the ten metrics; while only 45 percent of those who have not been housed attained the same standard. This is an improvement upon the midterm results when only fifty percent of those who

had been housed met this standard, and 60 percent of those who were yet to be house did. This seems to suggest that the students who were probably disrupted at the beginning due to recent change in housing have now settled, while the performance those whose unsettled housing condition has persisted have deteriorated. This assumption is, perhaps, corroborated by the earlier finding that the greater percentage of those whose performance worsened between the midterm and final results are the students who are yet to be housed.

Final Middle and High School Student Evaluation

The same comparison was used for the final report as the interim report regarding the middle and high school students. There was little change during this time period; five students maintained the same standing, three with above average grades and two with below average. However, one student did make significant increase from below average to above average while the two students that had average grades at the time of the interim report both fell to below average.

Of the eight middle and high school students, four were housed during the study. For these students, housing did not necessarily improve their grades or attendance overall. One student housed during the fourth marking period was already receiving above average grades in the prior marking period and ended the fourth with above average grades. A second student that was housed during the third marking period did increase from average in that marking period to above average in the fourth marking period. A third student who was housed during the second marking period went from average grades to below average for the marking periods after being housed. The last student was one of the housed students who stood out. This student was already receiving above average grades ranging in the mid eighties however, after being housed in the second marking period their grades increased by eight to ten points in the third and fourth marking period. Additionally, their attendance improved in that they had missed eight days both MP1 and MP2 and only three in each of the subsequent marking periods.

Two of the students who were not housed received below average grades all four marking periods. However, their attendance was comparably different in that one was absent twenty-nine days and the other was absent two. The last two students actually left the Initiative during the school year. These students were not housed prior to leaving the study; one received above average grades all four marking periods even after missing thirty-four days of school while the other had received average grades three of four marking periods and fell slightly below average the last marking period. This student was absent twenty-six days.

The Housing Connection: Does it Improve Academic Achievement?

The Sprout project targeted elementary school- aged children and then also included middle and high school students whose families are imminently at risk of homelessness. In addition to providing housing support services to the families via Your Way Home's programming, the Sprout Initiative also coordinated educational supports for the children in order to increase key educational outcomes. Our review of ARMHIS data for the entire year yields a mostly positive association in aggregate between housing stability and key indicators of individual disposition, intellectual functioning and social competence, as described above. However, we would also like to caution that there are many factors and variables impacting these school-based success measures. Therefore, we would like to encourage the Sprout program to continue to track and evaluate these measures of the students via a longitudinal study. Having the ability to track the progress of the students over the course of another 1-2 years (or more) would be an ideal target to fully measure the impact of housing stability on student academic success.

Lessons Learned and the Future of the Sprout Program

In summary, over the course of the past 15 months, our research team has completed an evaluation study on the first year of the Sprout program. At this point in the report we would like to provide a review of some lessons learned from this process to provide recommendations on how Sprout can continue to develop and be successful in the future.

Continual Investments in the Sprout Collaborative Network

Cross-sector partnerships are inherently complex to manage. Your Way Home's success and the success of Sprout are dependent on the design of the collaborative model used to implement the program. Your Way Home is an expert in the collective impact model and how to use collaboration effectively. Therefore, we would like to encourage the development of collaborative processing and design tools to enable successul coordination within the network. This can include such tools as a handbook for partners with programmatic and collaborative guidelines, training sessions throughout the school year and the usage of benchmarking tools, for example a balanced scorecard, to set and share goals and updates with all team members.

The Ability to Track and Share Data Real-Time

Using data to make decisions during the school year to improve resources and exchange information in the schools on what is best for each student is a key consideration moving forward. Your Way Home may consider facilitating a process to help with the transfer of the ARMHIS metric data from North Penn to the Keystone Opportunity Center, Inc. In addition, the teachers and counselors could also be using this data to make adjustments to the services needed to best support the students. Some of the major findings from the key informant interviews with the Siemer Institute staff was the need to give the case managers and teachers flexibility to identify the children's most dire needs and adopt the most relevant interventions. In addition, the Siemer Institute staff emphasized how case managers facilitated goal setting between children and parents based on the revolving needs of the children, and supported both to work together towards the goals and target-measures. Having real-time data informed discussions of the ARMHIS metrics after each marking period would provide partners with this opportunity. This recommendation also includes identifying ways to streamline the process of gathering the data from the reports cards and other reports.

The Creation of a Transition Support System

The program may also want to consider creating a transition support system for newly housed students in collaboration with Keystone Opportunity Center administrators since the data seems to suggest that the disruption potentially caused by the housing move may have a negative impact on their performance.

A Focus on Reducing Stigma and Increasing Enrollment

Sprout program partners can work together to identify ways to increase enrollment in the program and educate school district staff on how to communicate with families and reduce potential stigma involved with the program. Certain obstacles presented themselves during the first year of the program where a percentage of the families eligible for the program did not enroll. A continued focus on the referral process and the strategies used to enroll families is a key consideration going forward.

Conclusion

This final evaluation report of Your Way Home's Sprout program included a synthesis and review of the work completed over the course of the 15 months of the study. The major purpose of the evaluation was to assess the impact of stable housing on indicators of successful behaviors in the classroom. The trends were mostly positve and do suggest a relationship between housing and the ability of students to be successful at school. The final report and data analysis from the schools on the majority of valriables included on the ARMHIS can be used for further assessment and evaluation of the program as the students progress. In addition, as in the interim report, we included middle school and high school students in this evaluation as a new population involved with the Sprout program and used their grades as the only assessment measure to review their performance. Lastly, we have included a few lessons learned and recommendations for the future to ensure the continuation of positive outcomes for the students participating in the Sprout program.