

360 Communities Year Two Final Report September 2011

An Evaluation of the Partners for Success[®] Program for the School Year 2010-2011



**CENTER FOR
APPLIED RESEARCH AND
EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT**

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
+ HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

**Prepared by:
Delia M. Kundin, Ph.D., Principal Investigator**

**Evaluation Team:
Kyla Wahlstrom, Ph.D., Center Director
Susan Rickers, M.S.W., Research Assistant
Allison Mattheis, M.A., Research Assistant**

Table of Contents

◆ Executive Summary	1
◆ Introduction.....	5
◆ Methods.....	7
◆ Results.....	9
◆ Evaluation Goal 1: Communication and Collaboration.....	9
◆ FSWs’ Work with Teachers.....	9
◆ FSWs’ Work with Parents	10
◆ Building Positive Relationships.....	12
◆ Evaluation Goal 2: Organizational Support.....	15
◆ FSWs’ Views on Professional Development Processes	15
◆ FSWs’ Views on Needed Support	15
◆ Evaluation Goal 3: Impact on Schools, Families, and Students	17
◆ Students’ Progress.....	17
Improved Academics	18
Improved Engagement	18
General Progress	18
◆ Students’ Scores.....	23
◆ Students’ Growth	23
◆ Parents’ Involvement	24
Parent Questionnaires	24
Parents’ Changes.....	25

Table of Contents (Continued)

◆ Program Satisfaction.....	26
Teachers’ Satisfaction.....	26
Parents’ Satisfaction.....	27
FSWs’ Satisfaction.....	28
◆ Summary of the Findings.....	29
◆ Evaluation Goal 1: Communication and Collaboration.....	29
◆ Evaluation Goal 2: Organizational Support.....	30
◆ Evaluation Goal 3: Impact on Schools, Families, and Students	30
◆ Conclusion and Recommendations.....	32

LIST OF TABLES:

Table 1: FSWs’ follow-up communications on FLPs	11
Table 2: Modes of communication reported by FSWs on FLPs.....	11
Table 3: Types of assistance provided to parents	12
Table 4: FSWs’ perceptions of attributes that help to build positive relationships with parents..	13
Table 5: FSWs’ perceptions of building trust in relationships	14
Table 6: FSWs’ views on the effectiveness of monthly in-service sessions.....	15
Table 7: FSWs’ reports of students’ improvements on FLPs.....	17
Table 8: Teachers’ perceptions of students’ educational progress	19
Table 9: Students’ percent of RIT growth targets by grade.....	24
Table 10: Change in parents’ level of involvement in school-related activities.....	25
Table 11: Parents’ perceptions of their changes at home	26

Table of Contents (Continued)

LIST OF TABLES: (Continued)

Table 12: Teachers' views on the benefits of having FSWs in their schools27

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Parent Questionnaire Results 34

Appendix B: Interview Guides 37

Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The Partners for Success[®] (PFS) Program, serving Dakota and Scott counties, provides basic needs assistance (e.g., food, clothing, school supplies) to students and families. In addition, for over 15 years, Family Support Workers (FSW) have collaborated with teachers, principals and school staff in 39 schools to help boost students' educational progress. The two main program goals of PFS are: 1) Establish a standard level of services across districts; and 2) Effectively partner with schools to ensure that all students reach proficiency in reading by third grade.

In May 2009, 360 Communities contracted with the University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) to conduct an evaluation of its Partners for Success[®] (PFS) Program. During the 2009-2010 school year, evaluators focused on the formative aspects of the program by gathering information about how well the program's goals were met with regard to Family Support Worker (FSW) in-service trainings, program implementation, and the program's impact on students, families and schools. The first year's evaluation provided PFS program staff members with information to help guide further program development.

In the second evaluation (2010-2011), CAREI evaluators collaborated with PFS program staff to formulate three specific goals for the evaluation: 1) Determine the extent to which FSWs communicate and collaborate with parents/guardians and teachers to build relationships and improve students' educational performance; 2) Continue to monitor PFS professional development processes and determine how 360 Communities can continue to support and strengthen program activities; and 3) Identify how the program impacts students, families and teachers by focusing on observed changes from the perspectives of teachers, parents/guardians, FSWs, and from analysis of student data. The second year's evaluation was implemented in 10 elementary schools located in six Minnesota cities: Burnsville, Farmington, Hastings, Lakeville, South St. Paul, and West St. Paul. This report summarizes the evaluation data collected from September 2010 through June 2011.

EVALUATION DATA

Individual interviews were conducted with 10 FSWs, 16 teachers and 17 parents regarding their experiences with PFS. Pre and post program questionnaires were collected from 41 parents regarding their involvement in their child's school-related activities. Document analysis was carried out on Family Learning Plans (FLP) (n=54) to determine the extent to which FSWs collaborate with teachers and families. Students' (n=40) standardized reading test scores were analyzed to assess students' academic growth over a year's time.

FINDINGS

Communication and Collaboration

- ✓ Teachers and parents have very positive relationships with FSWs. Both groups perceived FSWs to be open and honest, non-judgmental, encouraging and considerate of others' capabilities, time and privacy.
- ✓ FSWs' best practices for working with parents and teachers include: 1) Communicating frequently with parents and teachers; 2) Visiting with parents and teachers in person; 3) Attending parent/teacher conferences; 4) Developing FLPs systematically (e.g., meeting with parents, asking for teachers' input, organizing students' school work, and reviewing and modifying activities based on families' changing schedules and challenges.); and 5) Following up with teachers regarding students' progress.

Organizational Support

- ✓ FSWs view in-service training sessions as informative. Suggestions for improving training sessions include meeting every other month, rather than monthly, to reduce the amount of time FSWs are away from schools, and including more program information about secondary schools.
- ✓ FSWs request additional support from PFS with respect to databases, computers, and balanced workloads. They also request additional materials to share with families such as workbooks, books, and phonics practice sheets.
- ✓ FSWs request additional coverage for the hotline at 360 Communities to assist families in a timely manner.

Program Impact

Parents:

- ✓ A comparison of parents' pre-post questionnaire responses shows that working with a FSW does have an effect on parents regarding how often they use educational materials at home and talk with a FSW about their child's educational progress. The fall to spring increase for these two activities was statistically significant.
- ✓ Parents indicate that they have a better understanding of their child's homework needs, they spend more one-on-one time with their child, and they practice reading, spelling and math with their child more often. They would recommend working with a FSW to others.

Students:

- ✓ The area of student improvements most frequently reported by FSWs is reading. FSWs also report no improvements, in some cases. These results are mixed, as might be expected given the diversity of students' needs and abilities.
- ✓ Teachers indicate that FSWs play an important role in students' progress by helping parents support their child's school work at home.
- ✓ Teachers observe students' improvements in cases where parents work with FSWs, and when students follow through on school work at home. In some cases, teachers also observe improvements where students receive additional support from programs and services provided at school.
- ✓ A comparison of students' fall 2010 and spring 2011 MAP reading scores shows that half of the students in the evaluation met or exceeded their growth targets. The other half made progress toward their targets, and several were close to their targets (i.e., 75% or more).

Teachers:

- ✓ Teachers are wholeheartedly satisfied with the work of FSWs in schools, whether it is to provide basic needs resources to students and families or to facilitate communications between parents and schools. Only two teachers in the evaluation were unsure about the role of the FSW with regard to FLPs, and how they parents to support their child with school work at home.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ **Continue to collect program effectiveness data from multiple sources in an effort to isolate the impact of FSWs in schools.** In the present evaluation, showing how PFS affects students and parents is complicated by students receiving extra educational support through other school resources and programs. In an effort to isolate the effects of PFS, information is needed on teachers' expectations, the parents' understanding of these expectations, and the extent to which the parents follow through with suggestions. Furthermore, students must also complete their work.
- ✓ **Continue to collect data from parents regarding their involvement in school-related activities.** Evaluation results show that working with a FSW does have an effect on parents with regard to how often they use educational materials at home and talk with a FSW about their child's educational progress. The systematic collection of data regarding how parents help their child(ren) at home is a key component of reporting PFS' overall effectiveness.

- ✓ **Continue to collect detailed information on FLPs and follow up forms.**
As part of this year's program improvements, PFS strengthened its FLP reporting processes and encouraged FSWs to record when they follow-up with teachers and parents. This allowed for a detailed analysis of FSWs' communications with teachers and parents.

- ✓ **Continue to address FSWs' requests for additional organizational support.**
FSWs' expressed the need for updated databases, balanced workloads, and additional materials to share with students and parents. FSWs also recommended that 360 Communities increase its coverage of the hotline to better assist families.

Introduction

Since 2009, evaluators from the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) have worked with the Partners for Success[®] (PFS) program staff members to evaluate how PFS meets its goals through the work of FSWs in elementary schools. The first year's evaluation (2009-2010) focused on the collection of formative data regarding the program's professional development processes, program implementation, and the effect of programming on students, families and schools. The results of the first year's evaluation were used by program staff to further develop programming and internal data gathering processes.

The second year's evaluation (2010-2011) focused on Family Support Workers' (FSW) activities in 10 elementary schools including schools located in Burnsville, Farmington, Hastings, Lakeville, South St. Paul, and West St. Paul, MN.

CAREI's Scope of Work

CAREI's 2010-2011 evaluation was designed to identify the effective ways that FSWs collaborate with teachers and parents in elementary schools. More specifically, the goals of the second year evaluation included the following:

1. Determine the extent to which FSWs communicate and collaborate with parents/guardians and teachers to build relationships and improve students' educational performance.
2. Continue to monitor PFS professional development processes and determine how 360 Communities can continue to support and strengthen program activities.
3. Identify how the program impacts students, families and teachers by focusing on observed changes from the perspectives of teachers, parents/guardians, FSWs and from analysis of student data.

Description of the Partners for Success[®] Program (PFS)

The 360 Communities¹ was founded in 1970 by church volunteers as a nonprofit human services agency to assist families living in Dakota and Scott counties in Minnesota. PFS is one of several programs implemented by the organization designed to connect families with volunteers and other needed resource organizations. For over 40 years, the organization has worked with community partners on crisis prevention to minimize the effects of poverty and to improve the overall quality of life for families in over 40 neighborhoods.

¹ The organization is formally known as Community Action Council, Inc. The organization announced its new name, 360 Communities, in January, 2010.

The PFS program was created in the early 1990s in response to the needs of students attending schools in Dakota and Scott counties. The program's activities are based on a premise that schools have little capacity to provide students and families with individual assistance often required beyond the school day.

The program's services are delivered in 39 schools through the work of FSWs located in the school buildings. The FSWs offer assistance to families needing support in areas such as food, clothing, financial assistance, school supplies, and so on. In 2008, the goals of the program changed to include proactive steps to address students' academic progress in addition to providing basic needs support. FSWs continue to serve as liaisons between families and schools in an effort to help parents communicate with teachers and other school personnel regarding their needs.

During the 2010-2011 school year, PFS provided families with over 2,200 donated items, such as school supplies, coats, and mittens. In addition, FSWs assisted over 1,126 families to access food, financial resources, and stable housing, and they provided parents with tools and strategies to help their children with school work at home through the development of 488 Family Learning Plans (FLP).

Methods

The methods used to collect data for the evaluation included individual interviews with FSWs, teachers, and parents; parent questionnaires; document analysis of family learning plans; and analysis of students' data including PFS program data, and test scores provided by school districts. This section describes the methods used for the evaluation.

Individual Interviews

CAREI evaluators developed semi-structured guides for conducting interviews with FSWs, teachers, and parents. PFS staff members received a draft copy of the interview guides for review and comment before they were finalized and used in the field. For all interviews, CAREI evaluators took notes and also made an audio recording. Each interview was transcribed into a database and was used for the qualitative analyses. The following sections describe participants.

FSW. Ten FSWs were contacted by email and were invited to schedule an in-person interview at a convenient time. All 10 agreed to participate. The face-to-face interviews were completed in December 2010. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes.

Teachers. CAREI evaluators collaborated with PFS staff members to identify active cases where FSWs developed FLPs and worked with teachers and parents on strategies to improve students' educational performance. Eighteen teachers were invited to participate in a phone interview. The first e-mail notice was sent out mid-February 2011 followed by a second notice in early March 2011, to those who did not respond. A final invitation was sent to teachers in mid-April. A total of 16 teachers completed interviews between March and May, 2011. Each interview lasted approximately 20-25 minutes.

Parents. CAREI evaluators, together with PFS program staff determined that the best way to extend invitations to parents to participate in phone interviews was through their regular contacts with FSWs. Twenty parents were invited to participate in a phone interview. A total of 17 parents (14 mothers, 3 fathers) agreed to an interview that lasted approximately 15 minutes. Interviews were completed between April and June, 2011. Eleven interviews were conducted in English, and six interviews were conducted by an interviewer who was a fluent Spanish speaker. The interviews conducted in Spanish were translated prior to analysis.

Parent Questionnaires

Pre and post parent questionnaires were developed by CAREI evaluators to gather data regarding parents' participation in their children's school-related activities. FSWs distributed pre-questionnaires to parents during their regular meetings, most of which were held during fall parent/teacher conferences in September, 2010. Post-questionnaires were filled out by parents in March and April 2011. Forty-one (41) parents completed both pre and post questionnaires.

Family Learning Plan (FLP) Document Analysis

CAREI evaluators collected FLPs and follow up forms to investigate how and when FSWs communicated with parents, teachers and students. These forms were collected two times during the year. In September, FSWs identified 68 FLPs they expected to follow throughout the school year. These FLPs were collected in January. By the end of the school year, FSWs were no longer working with several of the 68 families for reasons such as families leaving the school district, or parents' level of interest. The follow up forms collected in January were matched with those collected in May. This pairing process resulted in 54 FLPs included in data analysis. CAREI evaluators did not collect data on FLPs developed at other times during the school year in an effort increase data reliability.

Student Data

CAREI evaluators requested student data from school districts for students referenced in the 54 FLPs mentioned above. Student data were included in analysis only if both fall and spring scores were available. A total of 40 students' records were included in the database that includes reading MAP scores, demographic information, and whether or not students received one or more additional services such as tutoring, supplemental education services (SES), Title I services and so on.

Partners for Success Databases

The PFS program staff provided CAREI evaluators with data that were routinely collected by the organization regarding FSWs' activities from September 2010 through June 2011. For example, PFS kept internal records on the number and types of resources it provided to families such as food, financial assistance, FLPs, housing and so on.

Results

The results of analyses carried out on interviews, questionnaires, documents, and student data are organized by the three evaluation goals in the sections below.

Evaluation Goal 1: Communication and Collaboration

Determine the extent to which FSWs communicate and collaborate with parents/guardians and teachers with the goal of building relationships and improving students' educational performance.

The evaluators interviewed FSWs, teachers, parents and conducted a document analysis on FLPs and follow-up forms to gauge the extent to which parents/guardians perceived strong relationships with FSWs. The evaluators looked for specific ways that FSWs helped parents/guardians to increase involvement with their children at home, and to recognize their own potential for change. This approach is consistent with research suggesting that clients' abilities to engage in activities, their expectations, and their relationships with helping professionals are key elements for change across a variety of circumstances in schools.²

FSWs' work with teachers. FSWs served as communication liaisons between schools and families to help parents learn ways they can assist with their child's school work at home. According to FSWs (4), parent/teacher conferences were opportune times for them to introduce strategies for parents to use at home, and to develop FLPs for parents to follow.³ These conversations helped to identify a child's problem areas and tailor solutions that take into account the family's resources, social supports, and needs. Follow-up communications with teachers were carried out as needed.

FSWs' (10) preferred face-to-face meetings with teachers and parents, but they also used e-mails (7), and phone conversations (4). Some non-English speaking parents benefited from the translation assistance that FSWs provided (6). Eleven teachers indicated that FSWs consulted with them to develop FLPs for families. Teachers (15) also indicated that FSWs were the only staff in their schools who worked extensively to keep families connected to their child's school. A few examples of FSWs' and teachers' views on their communications are shared below.

I try to gather information from the teachers about what the system is in the classroom, and also about individual students. Then I share that information with the parent to show that there is a need, and that we need to address the problem, and we are going to address it together with the teachers and the parent and the student. All of us together will try to work out a strategy or a plan where the student can experience academic success at school. (FSW)

² Murphy, J.J. (1999). *Common factors of school-based change*. In, Hubble, Mark A. (Ed); Duncan, Barry L. (Ed); Miller, Scott D. (Ed), (1999). *The heart and soul of change: What works in therapy*, (pp. 361-386). Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association, xxiv, 361-386.

³ The numbers in paragraphs throughout the results section refer to the number of interviewees who made a particular type of comment.

There's a lot more change in the family that the teacher needs to be aware of if they are seeing stuff in children's behaviors. You need to hear 75% from the family and 25% from the teacher to understand what is going on. To have the constant contact with the teachers, to bug them too much when there is no change isn't helping my relationship with them. It's such a learning curve, but it's getting there. (FSW)

I work with [FSW] to come up with a needs assessment. We look at areas where students need more support and then we work together to set goals and then we work together to set up a learning plan to meet those goals. If a student is struggling with reading, one of the things that [FSW] is doing is making sure that they [parents] have their accelerated reading books in their hands and she is making sure that the parents understand what they need to do to help their child be successful in reading. (Teacher)

[FSW] keeps a log of conversations with parents and with me and then she uses that when she talks to either of us. She'll say this is what they say they are doing. She shares the information back and forth. So it's not just me as their teacher saying this is what your child needs. It's also her checking in to connect them with other services or help. It's helpful that she can reinforce what the teacher is saying and she also has ideas about how to approach something. (Teacher)

FSWs' work with parents. FLP documents are designed for recording how and when FSWs communicate with parents/guardians throughout the school year, as well as information about students' activities and changes. CAREI evaluators conducted a document analysis of FLPs and follow up forms to investigate the how and when FSWs' interacted with parents.

Over the course of the school year, the PFS program recorded 304 home visits with parents across all FSWs (33) in the organization (including those not included in the evaluation). Sixty-one (20%) of these home visits were conducted by the 10 FSWs included in the evaluation.

Overall, FSWs in the evaluation recorded 1,028 communication entries on FLPs. Table 1 shows the extent to which FSWs communicated with teachers (8.96), parents (7.00), students (2.57), and others (0.50) on each FLP. In addition, Table 2 shows that FSWs preferred communicating with parents in person (12.04), followed by phone calls (3.43), e-mails (1.65), and notes (0.04).

Parents' indicated in interviews that their direct communications with teachers were infrequent, occurring at conferences 3-4 times per year, or occasionally by phone, or written notes. In contrast, parents communicated directly with FSWs on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. According to one parent, the FSW is a "go-between" for teachers and parents.

Taken together, these data indicate that on average FSWs communicated with teachers, parents, students and others 19 times per FLP, and the majority of these communications were conducted in person.

Table 1: FSWs' follow-up communications on FLPs.

Communication with . . .	No. of Entries on 54 FLPs	Average Per FLP
Teachers	484	8.96
Parents	378	7.00
Students	139	2.57
Others (e.g. aide, nurse, social worker, grandparent)	27	0.50

Table 2: Modes of communication reported by FSWs on FLPs.

Mode of Communication	No. of Entries on 54 FLPs	Average Per FLP
In person	650	12.04
Phone	185	3.42
E-mail	89	1.65
Note	2	0.04

Five FSWs indicated that their priority in schools was providing students and families with basic needs resources. This is often a starting point for FSWs when working with parents regarding their child's needs. In addition, FSWs assisted parents in several ways with their child's school work: 1) FSWs met with parents to identify problems at home; 2) FSWs asked for input from teachers about what they expected students to complete at home; 3) FSWs worked with parents to modify their after school activities (e.g. time spent on homework and quantity) based on teachers' recommendations; 4) FSWs met with parents regularly to review and modify FLPs to accommodate families' changing schedules and challenges; and 5) FSWs followed up with teachers on students' progress. All 10 FSWs mentioned these steps in large part when describing how they worked with parents and teachers.

When asked about their familiarity with FLPs, parents (71%) indicated that they worked with a FSW on a FLP. Table 3 shows a summary of the frequency parents reported various types of assistance that FSWs provided to them. The areas mentioned most often by parents were homework planning assistance, followed by language translations, reading materials, basic needs resources, reading to students and referrals.

Table 3: Types of assistance provided to parents.

FSW Assistance	Frequency Reported*
Helped create homework plan.	8
Helped with language translation.	6
Provided reading materials (e.g., books, flashcards)	4
Offered basic needs resources (e.g., food, insurance, Christmas, fees).	3
Read with student during school.	2
Referred parent to special education services resources.	1
Provided materials explaining on grade level expectations.	1

*Based on interviews conducted with 17 parents.

Below are three examples of parents' descriptions of how they worked with FSWs.

She [FSW] has worked with us to give us ideas as far as things that would help at home like setting up homework plans. She's helped us tremendously. (Parent)

She's like a current throughout everything. She does it in order to keep us informed, to help out the families. And if we don't meet up, we talk on the phone. If there isn't a program for the kids, or when she needs to give us things about food or things like that, then we talk on the phone. (Parent)

She helps me a lot if my child is a little bit behind in one subject or something. She helps me and guides me to be able to help my child. It's easier for me to communicate with her about whatever happens because she speaks my language, Spanish. In the past years there hasn't been anyone like her that could help people like us and this year there was. She's a really good person; she has helped us out a lot. (Parent)

Building positive relationships. Researchers⁴ suggest that some of the important elements of a positive relationship include acceptance, empathy, genuineness, authenticity, self-determination, confidentiality, individuality, interest, warmth, trust and respect, to name a few. In the present evaluation, teachers and parents described many of these key elements when sharing their views about their relationships with FSWs'.

FSWs described their relationships with parents and teachers as good (5), stable (1), positive (3), helpful (2), and professional (1). Likewise, teachers described the strength of their relationships with FSWs as having good communication (3), being positive (2), being warm, being organized, thoughtful, wonderful (2), and being helpful and supportive (1). Similarly, parents described

⁴ Kadushin and Kadushin (1997). *The social work interview: a guide for human service professionals (4th Ed)*. Columbia University Press:New York; Christenson S.L. and Peterson, C. (2006). Parenting for Success: Review research. Retrieved from www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/00079.html.

FSWs as open (3), caring (2), good listeners (3), helpful (6), available (2), friendly (3), and positive (1). One parent also mentioned that it was important for her to have a FSW who can translate information into Spanish. She said, *“The truth is that I think my son has been at the school for four years, and we’ve never had a social worker, or someone like that, who can speak Spanish and translate for us, and the truth is, it has been really useful.”*

CAREI evaluators asked FSWs what advice they would give to others about how to build positive relationships. FSWs indicated that being open and honest about themselves (4), being non-judgmental (3) and considerate of parents’ capabilities (3) were among their top considerations (see Table 4). FSWs also indicated that they try to focus on the positive aspects of the home, they respect parents’ time and privacy, and they try to show encouragement. One FSW said,

I encourage people a lot. The key is the relationship. I do everything for the relationship. [Parents] are in all different stages of the process. I try to create a positive school environment and be there for them when the moment is right and go from there. That's my purpose is to get parents involved and engaged with their children. If they're not strong enough to do that, then I try to help strengthen them. I encourage the teachers also. I say you know this student is so lucky to have you as a teacher. I do that for real, I'm not just trying to butter them up. I see they come up with some great ideas for students.

Table 4: FSWs’ perceptions of attributes that help to build positive relationships with parents.

Attributes of Positive Relationships	Frequency Reported*
Openness and honesty about self	4
Considerate of parents’ capabilities	3
Non-judgmental	3
Consider multiple points of view	2
Show concern	2
Learn about home environment	2
Focus on the positive	2
Respect privacy	2
Respect time	1
Show encouragement	1

*Based on interviews conducted with 10 FSWs.

Another aspect of a FSW characteristic that helps to build positive relationships with parents and teachers was trust. Table 5 summarizes what FSWs, teachers, and parents shared about building trust in their relationships. FSWs, teachers and parents all agreed that a willingness to help builds trust in their relationships. In addition, teachers and parents indicated that they trusted FSWs because they were friendly, easy to talk, non judgmental, and addressed their concerns and provided information.

Table 5. FSWs' perceptions of building trust in relationships.

FSWs build trust by...	Teachers trust FSWs because they are...	Parents trust FSWs because they ...
Helping	Helpful	Help
Doing what they say they will do	Easy to talk to	Address concerns
Being casual	Friendly	Don't make judgments
Being a cheerleader		Have good advice
Giving support		Listen
Showing respect		Provide information
		Reinforce changes at home
		Remain friendly
		Stay in contact

Below are three examples of how FSWs, teachers, and parents described their trusting relationships.

I'm positive with parents and try to build them up and focus on something that they are doing right and share that with them and help them to be a better parent. A lot of parents are struggling to be parents. And I think they see me as a person they can trust that's on their side. I'm their advocate and I feel that way with teachers too, I'm advocating for their special students in the classroom. (FSW)

We have a great relationship. Very open communication is the biggest strength. If she has something that she wants to talk with me about with a situation, or if a family called her about something or if I have something I'm concerned with. It's real open and she's easy to talk with. (Teacher)

[FSW] gives me a call to just tell me, you know I checked in with the teachers, they're really proud with how well you're doing with reading with the girls at home. So again, it was another kind of boost with me, just giving me confidence that they think I'm doing good. Because it's frustrating as a parent when your kids aren't doing very good. It makes you feel like a failure too. (Parent)

Evaluation Goal 2: Organizational Support

Continue to monitor PFS professional development processes and determine how 360 Communities can continue to support and strengthen program activities.

FSWs' views on professional development processes. FSWs attended nine in-service training sessions during the 2010-2011 school year. PFS staff members invited presenters from school districts and community organizations with expertise in areas such as abuse and neglect, family dynamics and behavior, parent involvement, and reading. In-service topic areas included family reading strategies, ELL reading strategies, access to family violence resources, family relationships, test-taking strategies, summer reading loss. Presenters from community organizations also shared information on how to help parents recognize, and address communication and behavior problems at home. The sessions were held once a month and lasted 3 hours each.

CAREI evaluators asked FSWs to reflect on their experiences with the training sessions and to suggest ways that 360 Communities can provide them additional support in the field. FSWs' views on the effectiveness of in-service sessions are summarized in Table 6. Overall, FSWs indicated that the sessions were good (5) and informative (2). One person thought the sessions were too long, while another FSW suggested that in services be scheduled less frequently (e.g., every other month) to reduce the amount of time that FSWs are away from schools. In addition, FSWs would like to receive more information on implementing the work in secondary schools and with special needs students (i.e., ADD and ADHD).

Table 6. FSWs' views on the effectiveness of monthly in-service sessions.

Views on Professional Development In-Service Sessions	Frequency Mentioned*
The sessions are good.	5
The sessions are informative.	2
The sessions are too long.	1
The sessions need to include secondary school information.	1
The sessions need to be scheduled every other month.	1
The sessions need to include information about how to assist families with ADD and ADHD students.	1

*Based on interviews conducted with 10 FSWs.

FSWs' views on needed support. FSWs expressed their needs for additional support in three main areas including updated databases, a balanced workload, and additional materials to share with parents and students. For example, three out of 10 FSWs requested that changes be made to improve the efficiency of databases in the organization. One FSW said,

I wish our database could be more efficient because it gets really hard. I think they are trying, but you go into a system and our clients and attendees are in different systems. You go in to get demographics, the financial, client notes and then you have to enroll them for PFS and then enroll them into emergency services. You have to get out of another system and go into another

one and 'attend' is another one. The systems are separate. It takes 5 or 6 hours to do the work on the computer. You get kicked off a lot too.

Three FSWs requested more balance in their workload. For example, FSWs indicated that it is sometimes difficult to engage parents in a FLP when the family's basic needs are not yet met. One FSW said,

There seems to be so much pressure on FLPs. I know they are trying to get that to be more of what the role is, but I don't think that I'm needed for that kind of stuff. I think what is really looked at is the FLPs and that's hard on a lot of us. We talk about what our job is with FLPs, and our job is about so many other things.

FSWs (2) also suggested that PFS provide additional materials to share with families such as books, phonics practice sheets, and workbooks. Other areas where FSWs would like more assistance included a laptop computer to keep up with follow-up forms, and more information on how to keep parents engaged with school related activities.

Two FSWs were concerned that not enough people were available at 360 Communities to answer the hotline when families call for assistance. For example, one FSW said,

I don't like to leave the phone message that we've been asked to leave. 'If you need immediate assistance call the main office at the 24 hour hotline.' Half of the time I call, no one answers and the answering machine is on. And when I've leave messages, I don't get a call back and I'm a family support worker. I have a feeling there are a lot of people in the community calling there and leaving messages that aren't getting called back and I'm very concerned about that. As a family support worker, if I've got a family calling me and they call that number, how does that make me look? That reflects on my relationship with them. That's a concern with me and I've heard that from a lot of family support workers.

Lastly, a FSW expressed a need to have PFS program staff attend a teacher staff meeting at the beginning of the school year to help explain how teachers can help FSWs with students and families. In describing two PFS program staff members, the FSW said,

Lisa has been wonderful. It would be helpful for her to come to the first presentation at school for teachers. Lisa and Ben could explain in different ways about how they [teachers] could help the FSWs. The support from Ben and Lisa would help to give teachers the right message so that will open the door faster for us.

Evaluation Goal 3: Impact on Schools, Families, and Students

Identify how the program impacts students, families and teachers by focusing on observed changes from the perspectives of teachers, parents/guardians, and student data.

To address the third evaluation goal, CAREI evaluators analyzed interview data, pre and post parent questionnaires, FLPs and follow-up forms, and students' test scores.

Students' progress. FSWs kept FLP records that showed whether or not students made progress, based on teacher feedback or their own observations. Table 7 summarizes FSWs' entries on FLPs relating to students' improvements (n=115). FSWs' reported that students improved in five main areas. Improvements in reading were reported most often on FLPs (27%). Fifteen percent (15%) of the entries were for class improvements, followed by homework (13%), and math (9%). No improvement for students represented twenty-one percent (21%) of FLP entries.

The information presented in Table 7 is similar to teachers' observations of students' improvements in classrooms. CAREI evaluators asked 16 teachers to describe the changes they observed in specific students during the school year. The investigation of changes in the classroom were based on the premise that day-to-day improvements in student performance may be difficult to capture in a single annual test score. Table 8 on (pages 16-19), shows a summary of teachers' perceptions of students' progress, since their families began working with a FSW, expressed in conditional statements of "when", "and", "then".

Table 7. FSWs' reports of students' improvements on FLPs.

Students' Improvements	No. of Entries on 54 FLPs	Percent*
Reading	31	27%
No improvement	24	21%
Improvements in class	17	15%
Homework	15	13%
Math	11	9%
Student responsible for work	5	9%
Turned in planner	4	3%
More focused	3	2%
Working hard	2	<1%
Less frustrated	1	<1%
Improved confidence	1	<1%
All grades improved	1	<1%

*Based on a total of 115 entries recorded on 54 FLPs.

Teachers noticed that FSWs connected families with needed resources. They also noticed that FSWs assisted parents with structuring homework activities, and suggested reading and spelling materials to use at home. In addition, FSWs helped parents stay involved with teachers during activities such as conferences at school.

Teachers also observed that parents followed-up in ways that supported students' progress. For example, parents read with their child on a regular basis, or they attended parent/teacher conferences. Three themes emerged from the data with regard to parents' involvement and students' progress: 1) **Improved Academics** are cases where teachers observed specific changes in students' performance such as improved reading or math; 2) **Improved Engagement** are cases where teachers observed changes in students' attitudes, behaviors, and participation in class; and 3) **General Progress** are cases where teachers observed that students completed work or they were referred for additional assistance.

Improved academics. In eight out of 19 cases (42%) teachers observed improvements in students' reading when FSWs worked with parents to help their child at home. In these cases, teachers thought that parents felt supported by the FSW (2), and they were consistently involved in their child's activities at home such as reading with the child (4), and they held their child accountable for homework (2) and so on. Similarly, teachers observed that students worked with their parents on reading and spelling at home, and in some cases, students also received additional assistance from other services offered through the school.

Improved engagement. In 6 out of 19 cases (32%) teachers indicated that students improved their attitudes, participation, and behaviors regarding their school work. In these cases, FSWs helped parents stay involved by connecting the family with needed resources, providing transportation and school supplies, and helping structure homework. Teachers perceived less direct participation by some parents compared to cases where they observed students' improved academics. For example, teachers reported that parents attended conferences when they had not done so in the past, or they paid more attention to what was expected of their child at school. In these cases, teachers indicated that students were more confident (2), their homework was completed (2), they were more involved in class (1), and attitudes improved (1).

General progress. In 5 out of 19 cases (26%), teachers described progress in terms of returning books, handing in work, and receiving medical assistance. Similar to other cases, FSWs worked to encourage parents and to keep them involved with a FLP and with teachers. In these five cases, teachers perceived that parents were inconsistent with helping students at home and few improvements were observed in this group.

Table 8. Teachers' perceptions of students' educational progress.

Level 1 – Improved Academics (n=19 students)					
Student Case Number	When the FSW. . .	And the parent(s) . . .	And the student . . .	Then . . .	Student's Current Status
<i>1</i>	<i>Worked to keep the family positive about the school setting and provided resources.</i>	<i>Read with student on a regular basis.</i>	<i>Received multiple interventions..</i>	<i>The student's attitude, reading and math improved.</i>	<i>"We have made huge progress and yet she is nowhere near 4th grade work."</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Helped parents with homework structure/ completion.</i>	<i>Held the student accountable for completing the homework.</i>	<i>Received reading assistance from other teachers (interventions).</i>	<i>The student completed work and reading scores have "gone through the roof."</i>	<i>"He is still behind grade level, but his gains have been astronomical, they have been really quite good."</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>Worked with parents on how to use flash cards at home.</i>	<i>Was more supportive and attended conferences.</i>	<i>Practiced flash cards and completed homework.</i>	<i>The student's work was returned and the DRA reading level went up from level D to level I.</i>	<i>"His reading level has gone up six levels...Now I see that the things he is supposed to read is coming back more often and he's practicing his flash cards and getting more of his homework done. That helps to make his mother more accountable."</i>
<i>6</i>	<i>Worked with the parents on an educational plan.</i>	<i>Worked with the student on reading.</i>	<i>Practiced reading with parents.</i>	<i>The student's MAP score rating increased from the 1st percentile to the 35th percentile.</i>	<i>"My goal is to get students within range which would be following the curve staying above the 35th percentile. . . She is there right now which is really good."</i>

Table 8. Teachers' perceptions of students' educational progress. (Continued)

Level 1 – Improved Academics (Continued)					
Student Case Number	When the FSW . . .	And the parent(s) . . .	And the student . . .	Then . . .	Student's Current Status
7	<i>Worked with parents on homework and how to use flash cards at home.</i>	<i>Used flash cards with student at home . . . Older sister helped with homework.</i>	<i>Practiced slowing down to look at words..</i>	<i>The student's spelling tests and reading improved.</i>	<i>"His spelling tests have improved and his reading has improved. He learns by memorizing words, so taking the time to teach him to slow down to look at the words and the sounds rather than memorizing, has helped."</i>
11	<i>Worked with parents on reading strategies.</i>	<i>Read with student 20 minutes and then increased to the time to 35 minutes at home.</i>		<i>The student's reading time improved.</i>	<i>"Coming into third grade we would like to have [the student] be at a DRA reading level of 34 or 36. He is probably right now at a 28 to 30."</i>
13	<i>Worked with the mother and arranged for a tutor and services.</i>	<i>Felt supported and received needed services.</i>	<i>Received Title I services.</i>	<i>The student improved in reading and math and was engaged and involved.</i>	<i>"She is still being serviced by Title I."</i>
15	<i>Made a home visit and clarified teacher's expectations and worked on FLP for homework.</i>	<i>Worked on homework with student.</i>	<i>Turned in homework.</i>	<i>The student turned in homework that was correct, and the student's reading and math scores improved.</i>	<i>"She was turning in her homework more often and doing better on the homework that she was turning in. I've seen success with [student]. Her scores have been getting better in reading and math."</i>

Table 8. Teachers' perceptions of students' educational progress. (Continued)

Level 2 – Improved Engagement					
Student Case Number	When the FSW . . .	And the parent(s) . . .	And the student . . .	Then . . .	Student's Current Status
4	<i>Helped parents with homework structure/ Completion.</i>	<i>May or may not have checked homework.</i>		<i>The student seemed to care more about the work, and homework was turned in completed.</i>	<i>"There has been progress but he is still struggling a lot with issues."</i>
9	<i>Provided the family with backpacks and other things that the family needed to function every day.</i>	<i>Were less stressed about providing food and from financial costs.</i>	<i>Felt comfortable .</i>	<i>The student was more confident.</i>	<i>"Academically [the student] has stayed at level or has grown."</i>
10	<i>Worked with the parents and the student to stay involved by explaining what is needed for school work.</i>	<i>Felt supported.</i>	<i>Felt supported.</i>	<i>The student stayed involved in the classroom.</i>	<i>"He spoke no English when he came and now you would never know it. I know that it was from [FSW]."</i>
19	<i>Worked with parents on FLP to help student adjust to school .</i>	<i>Stayed in contact with the FSW.</i>	<i>Worked on school work at home and with sibling.</i>	<i>The student was more confident and more homework was completed.</i>	<i>"The quality of her work and her desire is more intrinsic. Now she is self driven to do well and not to just get something done. She takes pride in her work and sharing."</i>

Table 8. Teachers' perceptions of students' educational progress. (Continued)

Level 2 – Improved Engagement(Continued)					
Student Case Number	When the FSW. . .	And the parent(s) . . .	And the student . . .	Then . . .	Student's Current Status
12	<i>Helped with parent's transportation to conferences and explained what the teacher wanted and provided books.</i>	<i>Attended conferences and read books to student.</i>	<i>Received assistance from the ELL teacher at conferences..</i>	<i>The student read with parent and felt successful reading to a younger sibling.</i>	<i>"To make him feel successful, it was presented as he could read them [books] to his younger sibling."</i>
14	<i>Worked with the parent and student on homework structure/completion.</i>	<i>Stayed "on top of things."</i>	<i>Completed homework.</i>	<i>The student's attitudes were better when the homework was done.</i>	<i>"There are peaks and valleys with the homework."</i>
Level 3 – General Progress					
Student Case Number	When the FSW. . .	And the parent(s) . . .	And the student . . .	Then . . .	Student's Current Status
5	<i>Worked with parent on a FLP.</i>	<i>Was not consistent with supporting the student.</i>	<i>Turned in work sometimes.</i>	<i>The student's progress was inconsistent.</i>	<i>"It's better than it was in the fall, but there is a very long way to go."</i>
8	<i>Helped with homework structure/completion and checked in with parents.</i>	<i>Parents talked with FSW.</i>	<i>Returned books.</i>	<i>The student's homework was returned.</i>	<i>"I do think that the students [FSW] does see from my classroom, they do have their homework done. They do return books."</i>
16	<i>Made a home visit to encourage the parent to meet with the teacher about an education plan.</i>	<i>Kept appointments to meet with the teacher when she had not in the past. .</i>		<i>The student made some progress that will help in the long run.</i>	<i>"It's not like he is miraculously doing really well in school, but I see that we are making progress that will help him in the long run."</i>
17	<i>Attended the conference and connected the family with other services.</i>	<i>Continued to work with the FSW.</i>	<i>Worked with a counselor.</i>	<i>Scheduled for ADD medication to help with organization and focus. .</i>	<i>Not yet improved.</i>
18	<i>Worked with the parents to get them on board.</i>	<i>The parents received valuable information from FSW on doctor resources.</i>		<i>The student received help.</i>	<i>Receiving medical assistance.</i>

Students' scores. Northwest Evaluation Association's (NWEA) academic growth projections are based on Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) using Rausch UnIT (RIT) scores. These are computer adaptive tests that are tailored to students' current achievement levels. The difficulty of each question on the test is based on how well a student answers previous questions. With each correct answer, questions become more difficult. If a student answers incorrectly, questions become easier. The final score is an estimate of the student's achievement level and growth.

CAREI evaluators compared fall 2010 and spring 2011 MAP scores for students in grades 2 through 4 included in the evaluation. We asked the six school districts to provide target growth figures for the 54 students with FLPs in the evaluation. Students' reading MAP scores were included in analysis only if both fall and spring scores were available. After data cleaning, scores for 40 students were included in the data analysis.

Students' growth. A student's change in RIT from fall to spring reflects his/her growth for that time period. Growth targets are the average amount of RIT growth, from fall to spring, observed in NWEA's most recent study. CAREI's calculations for the percent of growth target met for each student are based on each student's overall growth points, divided by his/her individual expected growth target provided by school districts.

The shaded areas in Table 9 show the extent to which students either met (100%) or exceeded (>100%) their growth target. Overall, half of the students (50%) met their growth target, while 50% did not. The non-shaded areas show the extent to which students made progress toward their growth targets. For example, while students may not have reached their targets, several were close to their targets (i.e., 75% or more). Only one student showed negative growth with a decrease of 11 points. Fifty-three percent (53%) of these students also received extra support through programs and services at their school.

It is difficult to assess the extent to which FSWs affect students' progress, when we look at standardized test scores. Thus, the evaluators throughout this report discuss data collected from several sources including FSWs and teachers (discussed earlier) in an effort to isolate the impact of FSWs in schools.

As mentioned earlier, data show that teachers observed improvements in students' reading in 8 out of 19 cases (42%) and reading improvements were frequently reported (57%) on FLPs by FSWs. These data are consistent with MAP reading scores that indicate that most students improved, even if they did not meet their growth targets. Moreover, according to teachers in this evaluation, FSWs played an important role in students' progress by helping parents support their child with their school work at home.

Table 9. Students' percent of RIT growth targets by grade.

2nd Grade (n=11)			3rd Grade (n=18)			4th Grade (n=11)		
Student's Growth Target	Student's Growth	Percent Growth Target	Student's Growth Target	Student's Growth	Percent Growth Target	Student's Growth Target	Student's Growth	Percent Growth Target
18	29	161%	13	30	230%*	7	18	257%*
21	30	142%	14	26	186%*	7	15	214%
12	15	125%	17	24	141%	9	16	178%
19	22	116%	10	13	130%*	8	14	175%*
19	17	89%*	9	10	111%*	11	14	127%*
21	17	81%	11	12	109%*	22	22	100%*
14	11	79%*	17	17	100%*	10	10	100%*
11	7	64%*	12	12	100%	4	4	100%
8	5	63%	9	8	89%	8	6	75%
21	11	52%*	14	9	64%	9	3	33%
20	6	30%*	15	8	53%*	6	0	0%
			11	16	50%*			
			10	5	50%			
			8	4	50%			
			14	5	36%*			
			9	2	22%*			
			21	2	10%*			
			9	-11	-122%			

Note: Each cell represents one student. *Students who received extra educational support at school.

Parents' involvement. Parents' interviews and questionnaires addressed their overall involvement with their child's school related activities. For the most part, parents reported that they mainly helped their children with reading and worked with FSWs on homework structure and completion. This information is consistent with FLP data that show homework and reading as two primary areas of support provided to parents by FSWs.

Parent questionnaires. Forty-one parents completed pre (fall) and post (spring) questionnaires. Parents responded to questions on a scale of 1 (almost never) to 4 (almost always), on how often they engaged in several activities. The evaluators used paired-samples *t* tests to compare parents' responses. As we show in Table 10, a clear fall to spring increase is indicated with two activities. Parents' use of educational materials sent home with their child in spring 2011 ($M = 3.46$ $SD = .674$) was significantly higher compared to their use of materials in fall 2010 ($M = 3.10$, $SD = .995$; $t = -2.246$, $p = .030$). Similarly, parents reported a significant increase in how often they talked with a FSW about their child's educational progress from fall 2010 ($M = 3.11$, $SD = .900$) to spring 2011 ($M = 3.54$ $SD = .741$; $t = -2.868$, $p = .007$). These differences show small ($d = .42$; $d = .36$) effect sizes. In all other areas, no differences between fall and spring activities were statistically significant.

These results show that working with a FSW does have an effect on parents regarding how often they use educational materials at home and talk with a FSW about their child's education. Complete results showing all answer responses and percentages are presented in Appendix A.

Table 10. Change in parents' level of involvement in school related activities.*

How often do you.....	n=41	2010 Fall Mean	2011 Spring Mean	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
1. communicate with your child's teacher?		2.39	2.53	-1.045	.303	.15
2. attend open house?		2.78	2.98	-.928	.359	.17
3. attend parent/teacher conferences?		3.59	3.76	-1.481	.147	.26
4. attend grade level programs/activities?		2.48	2.55	-.400	.691	.06
5. go to the library with your child?		2.13	2.15	-.158	.875	.03
6. use educational materials that are sent home with your child (e.g. books, flashcards, websites)?		3.10	3.46	-2.246	.030	.42
7. or someone in your family read to your child?		2.90	3.03	-.696	.491	.13
8. listen to your child read?		3.24	3.46	-1.502	.141	.30
9. discuss the school day with your child?		3.73	3.73	.000	1.000	.00
10. help your child with homework?		3.54	3.59	-.388	.700	.07
11. designate a time and place for reading and homework at home?		3.41	3.63	-1.355	.183	.29
12. help your child prepare for tests?		3.28	3.15	.797	.430	.10
13. help your child organize his/her school work?		3.12	3.34	-1.355	.183	.24
14. read materials sent home in your child's backpack?		3.63	3.68	-.388	.700	.08
15. talk with your Family Support Worker about your child's educational progress?		3.11	3.54	-2.868	.007	.36

Scale: 1 to 4, Almost Never to Almost Always. *Shaded rows indicate statistically significant changes.

Parents' changes. In addition to questionnaires, CAREI evaluators asked parents if they changed the way they related to their child since working with a FSW. Sixteen out of 17 parents (94%) mentioned several changes that occurred. An increase in understanding their child's homework needs was the change mentioned most frequently (8) (see Table 11). Parents also reported that they increased the amount of time they worked one-on-one with their child (2), they improved how they communicated with their child (2), and they practiced reading (2), spelling (2) or math (2) more often.

Two parents explained how FSWs worked with them to structure their child’s homework. One parent said,

We were trying to do too much. We were staying up too late trying to get everything done. We were getting overwhelmed and this wasn't very helpful. The [FSW] helped write goals for homework. This has helped us not get overwhelmed and has put things into perspective.

Another parent described how a FSW helped her prioritize homework. She said,

She made us make a schedule of times when we read with [student name]. There is a place where she has to do her homework, and when [student name] is doing her homework we don't let her watch television, and we don't listen to music.

Table 11. Parents’ perceptions of their changes at home.

	<i>Frequency Reported*</i>
Understands more about homework needs (e.g., time, organization)	8
Increased one on one time with child	2
Improved communications with child	2
Practiced math more often	2
Practiced spelling words more often	2
Practiced reading more often	2

*Based on interviews conducted with 17 parents.

Program satisfaction. CAREI evaluators asked teachers, parents and FSWs how satisfied they were with the PFS, and how well they thought the program worked in schools.

Teachers’ satisfaction. All 16 teachers were wholeheartedly satisfied with FSWs’ providing basic needs resources to students and families. Five teachers mentioned the benefits of FSWs facilitating communications with parents, and providing needed resources such as glasses, gas, transportation, coats, and mittens. Teachers also felt supported by FSWs themselves. One teacher said,

I think it's the best thing we've had. I hope this can continue. There is something about the relationship that is built when the social worker, for lack of a better word that's what she [FSW] is, on site. She is able to connect with kids. The kids trust her. The families get to know her. They are able to get the support services they need to get from point A to point B and all of that helps kids. It's so good and wonderful. We love her! She has been a life link for these families and it's nice to be able to have somebody beyond myself to make those connections. She is connecting the dots whether it's getting food to a family, she has that accessibility. That's not something that I do. If it's a matter of getting a gas card to someone because they can't drive, she's able to pull that together. She has those resources. No one has ever come to me and said, I don't have food or I don't have gas for my car. It's a different level of support. For these

families, it's exactly what's needed. The home visits have been so good. She is able to assess the situation. She lets me know what I can do to help.

Other areas where teachers expressed their satisfaction with the program included connecting parents to schools (5), and providing school supplies (3). However, two teachers were still unsure about how FSWs used FLPs to help parents support their child at home with school work. Table 12 shows three examples of teachers' comments regarding FSWs' work in their schools.

Table 12. Teachers' views on the benefits of having FSWs in their schools.

Connecting Parents to Schools
<i>I believe that the program works. I believe that some families don't know what support is out there for them and maybe they don't know what to do to help their child. Having someone there that can tell them and give them more direction is very helpful. Sometimes as a teacher, parents don't necessarily want me to tell them what they have to do with their child because you're playing two different parts. It's nice to have someone else to talk to the parents. She has a different background than I do, so she is more knowledgeable about services that can help. (Teacher)</i>
Providing School Supplies
<i>We wouldn't be able to function without them [FSWs]. It is that support structure for families in crisis or even families that need a tiny bit of help. There is no guilt associated with it at all. The kids know that if they need something, the family support worker has extras. They know they can go in and get some extra school supplies or things like that. There are the rules, and the family plans and all of this, but if kids need something, they know they can go there. It's wonderful. (Teacher)</i>
Still Not Sure How the Program Works
<i>I think it's great that we have the program. Time is the biggest issue to really use the FSW as well as we could. . .To have her here more would be huge and then I could see more about how this actually works, because I feel out of the loop. Part of it is I have so many kids and so many things to do and so many issues to take care of that we haven't taken the time where I feel comfortable where I know how this really works. (Teacher)</i>

Parents' satisfaction. All 17 parents interviewed were very satisfied with their FSW, they thought it was important to have FSWs at schools, and they would recommend working with a FSW to others. One parent described how important it was for her to have a FSW at her child's school when she said,

I think it's really, really important. The teachers are too busy sometimes to kind of do the extra steps, to kind of help the kids and the families out. The teachers are kind of, I know they're busy with a lot of kids.

For Spanish speaking parents (6), it was particularly important to have someone speak their language at school. For example, one parent said,

I think it's really important because there are many families that speak a little English, but sometimes we don't understand the things that they send us from the school, the papers and all

that. Then [FSW] has been really great. The truth is she has helped us with everything we need and also with the boy.

FSWs' satisfaction. FSWs were satisfied with working at their schools and the relationships they have school staff. FSWs also shared positive comments about using FLPs, as well as some challenges they had with implementing FLPs. For example, one FSW explained how she used FLPs to think about a child's school needs. She said,

The thing I like about the learning plans is that it is taking them a step further than just getting their basic needs met. It's helping them to grow and not focus only on themselves, but on their children. It's getting them to think about their child and get engaged with their child while they are experiencing other things. We want to address those things first, but we always want to be thinking of the child and how they can help their child do better in school.

Two FSWs indicated that they needed more time to process FLP forms, and the freedom to choose cases where FLPs could be useful for families. For example, one FSW said,

I feel that I'm in a little bit of turmoil with the workload and because I feel 20 hours a week is not enough time to do what I think I'm expected to do. We have expectations from the school and we have expectations from the employer and I don't know if the school's expectations and 360's expectations are identical. I think that's the hard part for me. Trying to cut back on the basic needs is hard when you are in two schools and we still say we're going to do it to some extent. The school didn't say 360 will you do this for us? It was 360 saying we're going to do this.

Another FSW commented that FLPs were useful only in some cases, and would like for PFS to eliminate the requirement of 15 FLPs. She said,

It depends on the family. It [FLP] could be a lot more effective as a tool instead of a requirement for 15 families. I think FLPs are a really good tool for two-thirds of the families I work with and it also allows me to keep track of needs. I don't like knowing that I have to do a certain number because then I'm using it for families that I know won't necessarily be successful.

Two FSWs indicated that it was difficult for them to assess how well PFS works in schools because some teachers do not realize what FSWs do in the schools. Thus, some FSWs would like more consistency from teachers when they are contacted regarding students' progress. One FSW said, "It would helpful if teachers were more consistent. Sometimes I have to call more for follow-ups. Teachers may not respond."

Summary of the Findings

This report presents an evaluation of PFS activities across six school districts and includes findings from 10 elementary schools located in Farmington, Lakeville, West St. Paul, South St. Paul, Hastings, and Burnsville, MN. CAREI evaluators conducted interviews with teachers, parents and FSWs regarding their experiences with the PFS program. The evaluators also analyzed parents' pre-post questionnaires, FLP documents, PFS databases, and students' test scores. Together analyses offer a candid look at how FSWs worked with teachers and parents to keep families connected to schools. This section of the report summarizes the major findings and their implications for future program development. The summary is organized by the three evaluation goals that guided the evaluation: 1) Determine how FSWs communicate and collaborate with parents/guardians and teachers with the goal of building relationships and improving students' educational performance; 2) Continue to monitor PFS professional development processes and determine how 360 Communities can continue to support and strengthen program activities; and 3) Identify how the program impacts students, families and teachers by focusing on observed changes from the perspectives of teachers, parents/guardians, family support workers and student data.

Evaluation Goal 1: Communication and Collaboration

Determine the extent to which FSWs communicate and collaborate with parents/guardians and teachers with the goal of building relationships and improving students' educational performance.

Several FSW best practices emerged from the evaluation regarding their communications with parents and teachers. First, FSWs placed a priority on in-person meetings with parents and teachers versus phone calls and e-mails, although these were often used. FSWs also visited teachers whenever they could during teacher breaks, before and after school, and in hallways.

Evaluation results showed that parents communicated with teachers infrequently (3-4 times per year) compared to how often they communicated with FSWs (weekly or bi-weekly). FSWs followed up with teachers and parents approximately 19 times per FLP. The high frequency of parent contacts may be one reason why teachers valued FSWs as "life links" between schools and parents, especially when working to connect families with resources. Teachers also recognized that FSWs supported parents in their efforts to help their children with school work at home.

A second practice followed by FSWs involved attending parent/teacher conferences. FSWs considered these conferences opportune times to connect with parents and to introduce strategies that parents used at home to help with their child's school work.

Another practice followed by FSWs was their approach to developing FLPs: 1) FSWs met with parents to identify problems at home; 2) They asked for teachers' input about what they expected students to complete at home; 3) They worked with parents to organize after school activities (e.g. time spent on homework) based on teachers' recommendations; 4) They met with parents

regularly to review and modify FLPs, based on families' changing schedules and challenges; and 5) They followed up with teachers regarding students' progress.

Teachers and parents alike had very positive relationships with FSWs. For both groups, FSWs were considered open and honest, non-judgmental, and considerate of others' capabilities. They also encouraged parents to focus on the positive aspects of their families, and they respected families' time and privacy.

Evaluation Goal 2: Organizational Support

Continue to monitor PFS professional development processes and determine how 360 Communities can continue to support and strengthen program activities.

Evaluation results showed that FSWs continued to view in-service training sessions as informative. Suggestions for improving training sessions included meeting every other month, rather than monthly, to reduce the amount of time FSWs are away from schools, and including more program information about secondary schools.

Areas where FSWs requested additional support included updating databases and computers, balancing workloads to accommodate both FLPs and basic needs assistance, and providing additional materials to share with families (e.g., books, phonics practice sheets, and workbooks). A request was also made that PFS staff members attend at least one teacher staff meeting at the beginning of the school year to assist with explaining the program.

One area of concern for FSWs was their perception that not enough people were available to answer the hotline at the 360 Communities office in Burnsville. FSWs perceived that when families left messages requesting a call back, no one was available to follow up in a timely manner.

Evaluation Goal 3: Impact on Schools, Families, and Students

Identify how the program impacts students, families and teachers by focusing on observed changes from the perspectives of teachers, parents/guardians, and student data.

Evaluation results showed that FSWs reported students' reading improvements most often, followed by class improvements, homework, and math. FSWs also reported no improvements, in some cases. These results are mixed, as might be expected given the diversity of students' needs and abilities.

Teachers observed similar student improvements in classrooms. Conditional statements ("when", "and", "then") were used in this evaluation to express teachers' observations. Overall, teachers noticed that "when" FSWs worked with parents, "and" parents followed through on school related activities at home (such as reading with their child on a regular basis, or holding their child accountable), "then" students showed improvements in classrooms in areas such as reading, spelling, math, attitude, and confidence. When parents were less consistent with helping with

their child, teachers still noticed improvements such as students being involved or more confident. In other cases, teachers noticed that FSWs helped connect parents with additional resources such as counseling or medical attention, and teachers noticed that students made some progress even if it was not recognized as academic improvement.

The results from parents' pre-post questionnaires showed that working with a FSW does have an effect on parents. A clear fall to spring increase was shown for two activities. Parents' use of educational materials sent home with their child in spring 2011 ($M = 3.46$ $SD = .674$) was significantly higher compared to their use of materials in fall 2010 ($M = 3.10$, $SD = .995$; $t = -2.246$, $p = .030$). Similarly, parents reported a significant increase in how often they talked with a FSW about their child's educational progress from fall 2010 ($M = 3.11$, $SD = .900$) to spring 2011 ($M = 3.54$ $SD = .741$; $t = -2.868$, $p = .007$). These differences show small ($d = .42$; $d = .36$) effect sizes. In all other areas, no differences between fall and spring activities were statistically significant.

CAREI evaluators calculated the percent of growth target met for each student between fall 2010 and spring 2011. These figures are based on each student's overall growth points divided by his/her individual expected growth target. Half of the students in the evaluation met or exceeded their growth targets. The other half made progress toward their targets and several were close to their targets (i.e., 75% or more). Only one student showed negative growth with a decrease of 11 points.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Evaluating how PFS affects students and parents is multifaceted because FSWs rely on teachers to communicate their expectations clearly, and parents to follow through with suggestions about ways they can help with their child's school work at home. Students must also complete their work. In addition, students receive extra educational support from school programs and services, which makes isolating the effect of programs such as PFS complex.

In an effort to isolate the program's effectiveness in schools, data were collected from several sources including individual interviews with FSWs, teachers, and parents, as well as parent questionnaires, FLPs, PFS databases, and students' test scores.

The evaluation results together show that PFS is a valuable resource for families and schools. Where teachers are not able to work intensely with families beyond the school day, FSWs are able to provide personalized assistance in families' homes, as well as at school. One reason for this may be that FSWs use several best practices regarding how they communicate with parents and teachers, including communicating frequently, attending parent/teacher conferences, and developing FLPs where appropriate. The results also show that teachers observe students' improvements in classrooms when FSWs are involved with families. Furthermore, an analysis of students' test scores support these results as the majority of students in the evaluation met or exceeded their growth targets in reading, or they made progress toward their targets, and several were close to their targets.

These observations are also consistent with results that show working with a FSW does have a significant effect on parents' use of educational materials and how often they communicate with FSWs about their child's education. Parents appear to have a better understanding of their child's homework needs, they spend more one-on-one time with their child, and they practice reading, spelling and math with them more often when FSWs are involved.

The following recommendations are made to help guide future programming decisions:

- ✓ **Continue to collect program effectiveness data from multiple sources in an effort to isolate the impact of FSWs in schools.** This is particularly important, given that many students in the evaluation received additional educational support from school programs and services.
- ✓ **Continue to collect data from parents regarding their involvement in school-related activities.** The systematic collection of information regarding parents' activities around helping their child(ren) at home is a key component of reporting PFS' overall effectiveness.

- ✓ **Continue to collect detailed information on FLPs and follow up forms.**
As part of this year's program improvements, PFS strengthened its FLP reporting processes and encouraged FSWs to record when they follow-up with teachers and parents. This allowed for a detailed analysis of FSWs' communications with teachers and parents.

- ✓ **Continue to address FSWs' requests for additional organizational support.**
FSWs' expressed the need for updated databases, balanced workloads, and additional materials to share with students and parents. FSWs also recommended that 360 Communities increase its coverage of the hotline to better assist families.

APPENDIX A

PARENT PRE-POST QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Partners for Success®
2010-2011 Parent Pre/Post Questionnaire

Please note that in our tables, when we report percent and number in a cell, the top number is the percent, and the bottom number is the frequency of respondents choosing that response category. We calculate the percent only over those responding and do not include missing data.

How often do you engage in the following school related activities?							<i>t</i> test for paired samples		<i>Effect Size</i>
Approximately how often do you..... n=41		Almost Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost Always	Mean	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
1. communicate with your child's teacher?	Pre	15 6	51 21	15 6	20 8	2.39	-1.045	.303	.15
	Post	8 3	48 19	30 12	15 6	2.53			
2. attend open house?	Pre	20 8	24 10	15 6	42 17	2.78	-.928	.359	.17
	Post	10 4	17 11	40 8	44 18	2.98			
3. attend parent/teacher conferences?	Pre	2 1	5 2	24 10	68 28	3.59	-1.481	.147	.26
	Post	0	7 3	10 4	83 34	3.76			
4. attend grade level programs/ activities?	Pre	18 7	43 17	15 6	25 10	2.48	-.400	.691	.06
	Post	20 8	32 13	24 10	24 10	2.54			
5. go to the library with your child?	Pre	32 13	44 18	5 2	20 8	2.12	-.158	.875	.03
	Post	35 14	35 14	10 4	20 8	2.15			
6. use educational materials that are sent home with your child (e.g. books, flashcards, websites)?	Pre	7 3	22 9	24 10	46 19	3.10	-2.246	.030	.42
	Post	0	10 4	34 14	56 23	3.46			
7. or someone in your family read to your child?	Pre	10 4	20 8	40 16	30 12	2.90	-.696	.491	.13
	Post	5 2	22 9	39 16	34 14	3.02			
8. listen to your child read?	Pre	0	20 8	37 15	44 18	3.24	-1.502	.141	.30
	Post	0	10 4	34 14	56 23	3.46			

How often do you engage in the following school related activities? (Continued)							<i>t</i> test for paired samples		<i>Effect Size</i>
Approximately how often do you..... n=41		Almost Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost Always	Mean	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
9. discuss the school day with your child?	Pre	0	2 1	22 9	76 31	3.73	.000	1.000	.00
	Post	0	5 2	17 7	78 32	3.73			
10. help your child with homework?	Pre	2 1	10 4	20 8	68 28	3.54	-.388	.700	.07
	Post	0	10 4	22 9	68 28	3.59			
11. designate a time and place for reading and homework at home?	Pre	5 2	12 5	20 8	63 26	3.41	-1.355	.183	.29
	Post	0	5 2	27 11	68 28	3.63			
12. help your child prepare for tests?	Pre	5 2	20 8	22 9	54 22	3.24	.797	.430	.10
	Post	7 3	15 6	33 13	45 18	3.15			
13. help your child organize his/her school work?	Pre	7 3	24 10	17 7	51 21	3.12	-1.355	.183	.24
	Post	0	17 7	32 13	51 21	3.34			
14. read materials sent home in your child's backpack?	Pre	0	7 3	22 9	71 29	3.63	-.388	.700	.08
	Post	0	5 2	22 9	73 30	3.68			
15. talk with your Family Support Worker about your child's educational progress?	Pre	6 2	17 6	37 13	40 14	3.11	-2.868	.007	.36
	Post	2 1	7 3	37 15	54 22	3.41			

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDES

2010-2011 Evaluation of the Partners for Success Program Family Support Worker Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview. The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota was hired by 360 Communities to evaluate how well the Partners for Success program is working in schools this year. I'm conducting interviews as part of an external evaluation of the program.

I am going to ask you a few questions about your involvement with teachers, parents and students at your school. Your participation will help us better understand how the program works and what could be improved. Your comments will be held confidential and individual names will not be reported. We will tape record our interview only for accuracy and completeness. If you decide at any time that you do not want to continue with the interview, please let me know. The interview should take about 45 minutes to complete.

1. How long have you worked as a family support worker at this school?

2. How is your work structured?

- How many students are you working with at this time?
- Are you located in a central place? Name school(s)?
- How many hours do you work per week?

At school _____; With kids _____; With parents _____

- How often do you interact (formally/informally) with ...
 - The principal
 - Teachers

3. How are students referred to you for assistance?

- For what reasons are students referred to you?
- Are there any other programs at the school where students are referred for similar purposes?

4. How do you facilitate the collaboration efforts (cooperation) of teachers and parents/guardians to help solve problems related to students' educational needs?

- Family Learning Plans (FLPs)?
- How involved are teachers with developing FLPs?
- How involved are parents/guardians with developing FLPs?
- How are decisions shared about what approaches to take to address students' needs?

5. If you were asked to advise another Family Support Worker on how to build positive relationships with parents/guardians and teachers, what would you tell him/her to do when communicating with parents/guardians and teachers?

- Acceptance (for who and where they are)
- Looking at things from parents/teachers point of view
- Providing encouragement; confidence
- Respecting privacy
- Showing concern for their needs
- Showing regard for feelings
- Being open about self
- Showing encouragement
- Respecting individuals

6. Describe how you, as a FSW, develop trust in your relationships with the parents/guardians and teachers you work with on Family Learning Plans.

- Attitude towards parents/guardians and teachers?
- Want to be helpful?
- Show encouragement?
- Show confidence in parents/guardians?

7. In what ways do you follow up with parents/guardians and teachers regarding students' progress? How often?

- Phone calls
- Meetings at schools (e.g., FSW office, Parent/teacher conferences)
- Home visits

8. In general, think about the parents and teachers with whom you are now working and describe your relationships with both, so far this year?

- What are the strengths of these relationships?

9. What is your biggest success with family learning plans so far, this year?

10. What is biggest challenge with family learning plans so far, this year?

11. What changes have you observed in students, resulting from your work with families so far, this year?

- Homework completion?
- Behavior?
- Attendance?
- Reading?
- Math?

12. What, if anything, could the **Partners for Success program staff** do to support you more as a family support worker?
13. What, if anything, could **school staff** do to support you more as a family support worker?
14. From your perspective, how well does the Partners for Success program work?
 - Professional development trainings?
 - How could they be improved?
 - Partnerships with schools?
15. These are all of the questions we have at this time. Is there anything else you would like to add?

This completes the interview. Thank you for your participation.

**2010-2011 Evaluation of the Partners for Success[®] Program
Teacher Interview Guide**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview. My name is _____ and I'm conducting interviews with teachers who work with Family Support Workers on Family Learning Plans this year. The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota was hired by 360 Communities to evaluate how well the work is going.

I am going to ask you a few questions about your involvement with [name of FSW], the Family Support Worker at your school. Your participation will help us better understand how well the program is working and what could be improved. Your comments will be held confidential and individual names will not be reported. We will tape record our interview only for accuracy and completeness. If you decide at any time that you do not want to continue with the interview, let me know. The interview should take about 20-25 minutes to complete. If you consent to participate in the study, please indicate that you consent to participate for the record.

1. How long have you been a teacher at this school?

- Were you a teacher at another school prior to this? If yes, which one and how long were you a teacher there?

2. How are you involved with the [Name of Family Support Worker] at your school?

- How often do you meet with [Name of Family Support Worker]?
- How does the family support worker get involved with your students?

3. Why have you referred students to [Name of Family Support Worker] this year?

- How many students have you referred this year? (Academics/Other)?
- Are there any other programs where you refer students for similar purposes?
- How do you decide which program to refer students to for assistance?

4. How does [Name of Family Support Worker] facilitate collaboration (cooperation) between teachers and parents/guardians to help solve problems related to students' education?

- How familiar are you with Family Learning Plans (FLPs)?
- How involved are you with developing FLPs?
- How involved are parents/guardians with developing FLPs?
- How are decisions shared about what approaches to take to address students' needs?

5. What changes have you observed in [student] this year since working with a family support worker?

- [How involved parents have been for these specific students.]

- Reading, Homework?
- Behavior?
- Attendance?
- Reading? WPM?
- Math Facts?

6. What expectations do you have for family support workers?

- How does [Name of Family Support Worker] help you with students and families?
- In what ways does [Name of Family Support Worker] follow up with you regarding students' progress? How often?
- Meetings, phone calls, other (e.g., FSW office, Parent/teacher conferences)

7. In general, how would you describe your relationship with [Name of Family Support Worker], so far this year?

- What are the strengths of the relationship?
- How do FSWs develop trust with teachers?
- What are some ways that FSWs establish effective relationships with teachers?

8. From your perspective, how well does the Partners for Success program work?

- How can it be improved?
- Partnerships with schools?

9. These are all of the questions we have for you at this time. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

This completes the interview. Thank you for your participation.

**2010-2011 Evaluation of the Partners for Success[®] Program
Parent Interview Guide**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview. My name is _____ and I'm conducting interviews with parents who have worked with a Family Support Worker from your child's school this year. The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota was hired by 360 Communities to evaluate how well the work is going this year.

I am going to ask you a few questions about your involvement with [name of FSW], the Family Support Worker at your child's school. Your participation will help us better understand how well the program is working and what could be improved. Your comments will be held confidential and individual names will not be reported. We will tape record our interview only for accuracy and completeness. If you decide at any time that you do not want to continue with the interview, let me know. The interview should take about 15-20 minutes to complete.

Statement of Consent

If you consent to participate in the study, please indicate that you consent to participate for the record.

1. To begin, please verify the following information:

Your Name: _____

Student's Name: _____

School: _____

2. Have you worked with [name of FSW] the FSW at your child's school this year?

If no, ask:

Are you aware of [name of FSW] work at your child's school?

If no, politely end the interview explaining that our questions focus on the experiences that parents had with Family Support Workers this year.

Thank him/her for agreeing to be interviewed.

If yes, continue with questions 3-14 on the next page.

3. How are you involved with the [Name of FSW]?

Basic needs?
School work?

4. How does [Name of Family Support Worker] work with you to help with your child's school work?

- How familiar are you with Family Learning Plans (FLPs)?
- How involved are you in helping develop a FLP?
- Homework?
- Math?
- Reading?

5. How often do you talk/meet with [Name of FSW]?

Weekly?
Monthly?
Other?

6. How often do you talk/meet with your child's teacher?

Weekly?
Monthly?
Other?

7. Is [Name or FSW] available to you when you need to talk to her?

- Yes
- No

8. In general, how would you describe your relationship with [Name of Family Support Worker]?

- What are the strengths of the relationship?
- How do FSWs develop trust with parents?
- What are some ways that FSWs communicate effectively with you?

9. Since you began working with [name of FSW], what changes have you made in the way you help your child with his/her school work, if any?

- Describe

10. What changes have you observed in your child since he/she began working with [Name of FSW]?

- Describe.

11. How important it is to have a Family Support Worker in your child's school?

12. Overall, how satisfied are you with working with the Family Support Worker [Name]?
Are you

- Very Satisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Somewhat Dissatisfied
- Very Dissatisfied

13. Would you recommend working with a Family Support Worker to other parents?

- Yes
- No

14. These are all of the questions we have. Do you have any other comments about working with Family Support Workers that would you would like to add?

This completes the interview. Thank you for your participation.