

Report of Impact of School-Based Teams on Philadelphia Schools, 2009-10

Each year EducationWorks (EW) AmeriCorps members are placed as “school-based teams” (SBT) elementary schools throughout the School District of Philadelphia. Our school-based teams serve to enrich the school environment by supporting teachers and students in and out of the classroom before school, during the school day, and after school. In 2009-10, SBT served over **3200 students** in 7 elementary schools¹. Schools in which SBT members served were:

- ✓ Grover Cleveland School
- ✓ George Clymer School
- ✓ Tanner Duckrey School
- ✓ Edward Gideon School
- ✓ Kenderton School
- ✓ Mitchell School
- ✓ Edward Steel School

School-based teams are tailored to meet the needs of each individual school. SBT members serve 40 hours a week in their assigned school where they serve to ensure students come to school more frequently, are ready to learn, and succeed in school. EW members help create an environment in which students feel safe, with the goal of defusing and preventing potentially violent situations, and equipping students with tools to build a healthier and safer school environment.

During the school day these teams offer:

- ✓ Breakfast programs to enable students to start the day with a healthy meal and a smile on their faces.
- ✓ Classroom assistance, including one-on-one and small group assistance, to effectively reduce class size, decrease disciplinary issues, and support increased academic performance while simultaneously supporting students’ personal and social growth.
- ✓ Socialized recess to promote peaceful playgrounds with a vast array of games and activities for both outdoors and indoors which promote social and communication skills and reinforce concepts and basic skills.
- ✓ Accommodation rooms and in-school suspension for students who become disruptive in class to help them identify inappropriate behavior and learn ways to manage their anger and frustration.
- ✓ Afterschool activities and clubs including homework help, youth mentoring-empowerment groups, drill and stepping teams, basketball teams, chess and poetry clubs, and art programs.

SBT Outcomes

Report card grades

Using student report card grades and teacher survey feedback, we analyzed the effect of these school-based teams on teachers and students.

¹ In Cleveland, Clymer, Duckrey, Gideon, Kenderton and Steel, many of the youth attend the EW afterschool school program in the afternoon as well.

In analyzing fall and spring report card grades, we found that **89%** of students improved or maintained a passing grade in their chosen subject area. Table 1 provides a further breakdown of each of the four subjects chosen by students.

Table 1.

Students in SBT-Assisted Courses	
Improved or maintained passing grade in Mathematics	86%
Improved or maintained passing grade in Reading	89%
Improved or maintained passing grade in Science	98%
Improved or maintained passing grade in Social Studies	100%

Teacher experiences

Teachers were given questionnaires at the end of the 2009-10 school year regarding the effect of having the school-based team members serving in their classrooms during the school year. Teachers filled out surveys for students who interacted with EW members during in school and out of school hours. The graph in Figure 1 summarizes the results of the questionnaires.

Figure 1.

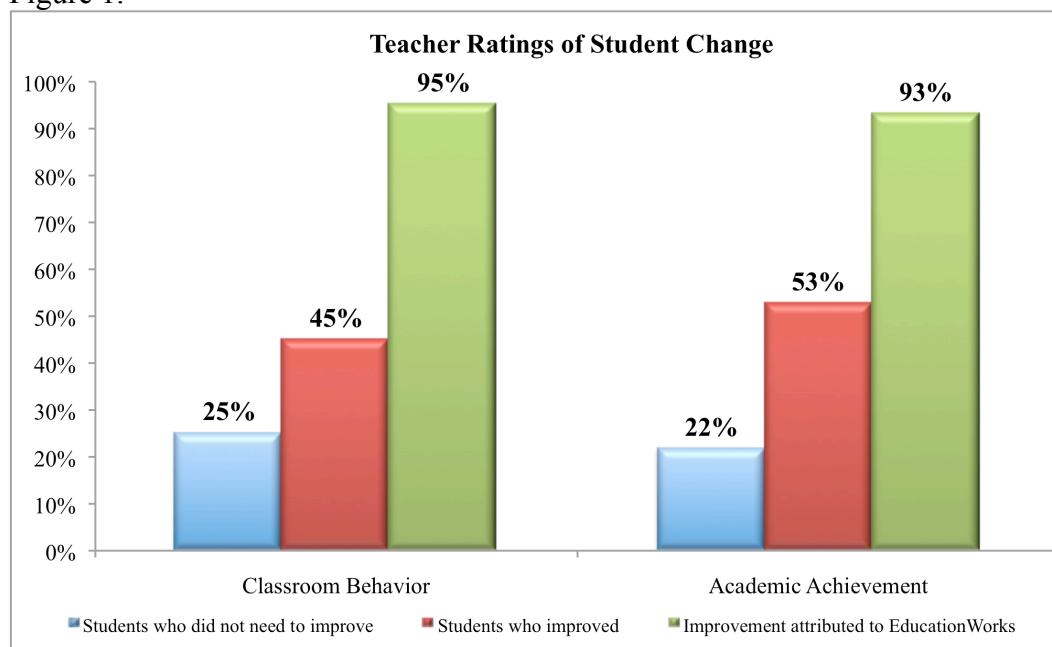


Figure 1 illustrates the extent to which teachers attributed their students’ improvement in behavior and academic achievement to their EducationWorks teams. Although teachers reported that about a quarter of their students did not need improvement in either classroom behavior or academic achievement, of those students who did improve, over **90%** did so because of the EW members. Teachers reported the direct effect they observed with their students and did not just attribute improvement to their own pedagogical strategies but to the assistance and support of EducationWorks members.

Teachers were also asked to describe how EW SBT members had assisted them during the school year. Teachers responded that the members provided support for teachers within the classroom,

assisted with teaching, tutored in various subjects, monitored children in the lunch room, organized structured play time at recess (“socialized recess”), monitored indoor recess, and stayed and called for students being picked up late. Teachers’ specific responses included:

[The members looked] out for all of the children, especially shy ones as well as troublesome ones [and they] helped [them] academically.

[The members] provided small group instruction.

An EducationWorks [member] assisted me every morning for 30 minutes during literacy. This was a tremendous help.

In my room, [the member organized] pull out small groups for an intervention [and] escorting students to other rooms or the office when necessary.

[The member’s] presence in my room for 45 minutes every morning has made a significant difference.

[The members provided] assistance in classroom for students needing interventions.

[The member’s] presence was invaluable this year. She served in many capacities from a writing tutor to a source of additional information and ideas to a mentor to a number of students.

Teachers were also asked to describe one student they thought was impacted the greatest by working with the EW members. Teachers described the youth’s behavior at the beginning of the school year, the change they observed in that student, and how they believed EW school-based teams contributed to this change. Below are 4 individual student descriptions:

CASE 1 –Mitchell Elementary

Description of Child

[The student] came to my classroom from a year in Africa. He could not write his name and was often aggressive with other children.

Change Observed

In the spring, which is when [the AmeriCorps member] became a regular participant in our classroom learning, [the student] began to be much more engaged in journal writing. He is proud of his creations, and should be.

EW Contribution

It was emotional and intellectual support. [The member] made [the student] feel successful and encouraged him, but also asked him questions about his work and helped him shape his thoughts to achieve the goal I had established for the kids. A gentle, kind, and smart guy; [the member] was excellent!

CASE 2 –Mitchell Elementary

Description of Child

One boy has had a very difficult time learning anything. He was included in my small group needing a lot of intervention. My EW person was helpful in disciplining the child firmly and fairly.

Change Observed

The child has serious learning differences which lead to his frustration, but he wanted the EW adult to be proud of him, so he tried to pay attention.

EW Contribution

The small half hour of [EW AmeriCorps] assistance helped this child understand that he is important to us and that we care how he behaves and learns.

CASE 3 –Duckrey Elementary

Description of Child

The student's behavior was sometimes disruptive, peer interaction was poor, and academic progress has been compromised. The student had no confidence in his schoolwork.

Change Observed

EducationWorks provided more attention in the form of one-on-one help. The student has help with homework from someone truly concerned about his progress.

EW Contribution

Socially and behaviorally the student is more responsive to redirection and more focused on schoolwork. The student now exhibits confidence in work and is excited about learning.

CASE 4 –Duckrey Elementary

Description of Child

The student was unsure of how to work with others, quite and contained, and did not warm up to other children.

Change Observed

EducationWorks provided the student with the opportunity to become more comfortable with his/her peers because he had to work in groups at the afterschool program. The student participated in groups, such as working in guided reading groups, playing group games, and participating in-group projects.

EW Contribution

The student now feels comfortable with his schoolwork and has lots of friends. He is now so outgoing and social that we have to make sure it doesn't become a problem.

Conclusion

Based on teacher responses and student grades, SBT members offered teachers and students valuable assistance both inside and outside of the classroom. Students were given additional support, attention, and academic assistance and schools' climates were improved through socialized recess. Additionally, teachers were able to better manage their classes and complete their lessons with fewer student disruptions.