

RAISING EXPECTATIONS 2020 - 2021 EVALUATION REPORT



Table of Contents

THE EXTERNAL EVALUATORS	3
REPORT AUTHORS	3
RAISING EXPECTATIONS	4
OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM	4
EVALUATION FOCUS	5
EVALUATION METHODS	6
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
RAISING EXPECTATIONS' IMPACT ON STUDENTS	10
ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROVIDED	10
STUDENTS SERVED	10
LEVEL OF CONTACT WITH STUDENTS	11
ATTENDANCE	12
GRADES	13
STUDENT SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS	15
<i>Perceived Support from RE</i>	15
ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY	17
ATTITUDES ABOUT POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION	17
POST-SECONDARY MATRICULATION	19
RAISING EXPECTATIONS' IMPACT ON CAREGIVERS	20
CAREGIVER SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS	20
SUPPORT FROM RAISING EXPECTATIONS	20
ATTITUDES ABOUT POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION	21
PROVIDING FAMILY STABILITY	22
IMPACT OF COVID-19	23
IMPACT ON STUDENTS' LIVES	23
IMPACT ON FAMILIES	24

The External Evaluators

Transformative Research and Evaluation (TRE Consulting) is dedicated to maximizing the impact of nonprofits, schools, companies, and government agencies. We support organizations that desire impactful and dynamic change in youth, communities, and society.

TRE has experience in youth development, K-12 and post-secondary education, public health, social work, and community partnerships. Our expertise aids us in designing and conducting comprehensive evaluations to determine the impact of programs on teachers, students, schools, and communities. TRE believes in utilization-focused evaluations, which is an evaluation approach that prioritizes utility and judges an evaluation primarily on its usefulness to intended users. We apply this approach not only in our program evaluations, but in all our client engagements as we have found it to be the best method for executing a project and producing outcomes and products of greatest use to our clients.

TRE and its staff have evaluated grants funded by an array of federal agencies including the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institutes of Health (NIH), US Department of Education (ED), US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Report Authors

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TRE

Transformative Research and Evaluation

Raising Expectations

Raising Expectations (RE) was established in 1995 to provide youth living in Atlanta's most economically and socially challenged communities with high-quality youth development programs. The mission of Raising Expectations is to empower youth in crises by elevating academic, social, and civic expectations to facilitate high school graduation and post-secondary plans. The organization started when co-founders Maria Armstrong and Tangee Allen, who were Georgia State University students, decided to take action to support Atlanta children by providing after-school tutorials in reading and math. In a short time, more children joined the program doing the very thing society said that they did not want to do: learn and strive for greatness. Those tutorial sessions evolved into a nonprofit organization that has served more than 2,500 children with impactful youth development programming for 25 years in Decatur, East Lake, Pittsburgh, Vine City, English Avenue, Washington Park, and the Westside of Atlanta. RE's 360-degree approach to student achievement incorporates after-school academic enrichment with programs and partnerships that nurture social and emotional growth. Students begin their relationship with Raising Expectations when they are in elementary school and continue as they matriculate through secondary and post-secondary schooling.

Raising Expectations out-of-school programs serve youth in Grades 3 through 12 after school, during weekends, and in the summer. RE also provides ongoing support to high school graduates as they transition to post-secondary education opportunities and credentialed job training programs. RE works diligently to engage children and youth most in need of support due to academic, social, and financial challenges. A recent profile of 2020 – 2021 program participants revealed:

- 100% are eligible for federal free or reduced-price school meals
- 98% live in homes with a household income of less than \$30,000
- The average family size is five
- 88% of families receive food stamps
- 17% reside in households where one or both parents have been incarcerated
- 27% have individualized education plans (IEP)

Overview of Program

For 25 years, Raising Expectations (RE) has provided in-person school year and summer support programs to over 2,500 youth. The leadership of Raising Expectations recognized that the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic required that they reengineer their programs if they were to continue serving children and families. The new programs and implementation model ensured that the organization remained responsive to the needs of families. For the first time in the organization's history, Raising Expectations had to transition its programs, procedures, and staff to a virtual format in a matter of weeks.

After taking inventory of the needs of their families, most of which were employed in the gig economy and service industries (i.e., childcare, cosmetology, hospitality, and food/grocery), Raising Expectations knew that they would be impacted first and the hardest hit due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Upon learning that all school-based programs were going to transition to a virtual platform, RE worked to identify who amongst their enrolled families had laptops, internet access, and the status of those digital tools. The staff also queried families to

identify hardships. The staff identified three specific barriers that have been addressed continually since the beginning of the pandemic:

- **Education via Digital Literacy** – RE leveraged pre-existing longitudinal relationships with students and families to ensure students and parents were well-versed in the Atlanta Public Schools (APS) e-learning platforms, established a virtual framework to continue to provide virtual mentoring and tutoring coaching support, and monitored student grades and attendance utilizing APS' learning platforms to offer customized academic coaching sessions to students.
- **Financial Assistance** – RE provided case management support for parents who needed resources for rental assistance, utility payments, filing for unemployment, securing temporary employment, and securing affordable housing options.
- **Food Security** – RE supported families ensuring that they had access to food and food deployment opportunities. Requests for families were submitted and tracked by staff.
- **Addressed Technology Needs** – Several Raising Expectations students were either not eligible for or unsuccessful in securing APS tools and/or hot spots. RE purchased and delivered these vital technological tools to families. Recognizing the significant digital literacy disparities with RE parents, when tools were in disrepair, staff submitted the requisite forms to APS on behalf of the family, tracked the replacement of the tools, and delivered them upon receipt from the student's home school.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Raising Expectations learned even more about how to serve families and youth. The experience further underscored the importance of building authentic relationships with families. Due to these strong relationships, parents felt comfortable and were transparent with staff as they inventoried their financial, household, and social-emotional needs.

Evaluation Focus

This evaluation seeks to determine the impact Raising Expectations has had on the students they serve and their families and to unpack how the Raising Expectations staff creates this change. The findings for the evaluation will answer three questions:

- EQ1: What impact has Raising Expectations had on students' academics, attendance, attitudes, access to technology, family stability, and post-secondary matriculation?
- EQ2: What has been the impact of COVID-19 on students' lives, families, and academics?
- EQ3: What impact has Raising Expectations had on parents' attitudes, attempts to mitigate the impact COVID-19, family stability, and housing stability?

Evaluation Methods

To answer the aforementioned evaluation questions, we collected and analyzed data from six sources:

Student Survey – Students were asked to complete a 23-item survey developed by the external evaluators. The survey measured the support students received from Raising Expectations, their attitudes towards post-secondary education, access to technology, and family stability.

Academic Data – Academic data were provided for the 2020 – 2021 school year. This data consisted of both grades and attendance records of the students on a quarterly basis. The dates for the quarters are the following: Quarter 1 (August 24, 2020 – October 23, 2020), Quarter 2 (October 26, 2020 – January 15, 2021), Quarter 3 (January 19, 2021 – March 19, 2021), and Quarter 4 (March 22, 2021 – May 26, 2021).

Caregiver Focus Group – Eight caregivers of students in the program participated in a focus group with the evaluators. During the focus group, caregivers shared the support they received from Raising Expectations, the impact of the pandemic, and any suggested improvements to the program.

Student Focus Group – Three focus groups were conducted with a total of 23 elementary, middle, and high school participants in Raising Expectations programming. During the focus groups, students shared the support they received from Raising Expectations, the impact of the pandemic, their attitudes towards college and career, and any suggested improvements to the program.

Staff Focus Group – Three full-time Raising Expectations staff members participated in a focus group to understand Raising Expectations' programming, differences across age groups, the curriculum, and the impact of their programming.

Family Needs Data – Throughout the 2020 – 2021 school year, Raising Expectations provided families with food, technology, housing, and utility assistance. The data were analyzed to determine how much support and how many families were impacted.

Executive Summary

During the 2020 – 2021 school year, Raising Expectations served a total of 147 students, 102 at the main site, and 45 at the At-Promise Centers. Information about students' grade levels and schools is provided below.

Number of Students

School Level	Main Site	At-Promise Center
Elementary School	47	--
Middle School	23	45
High School	32	--

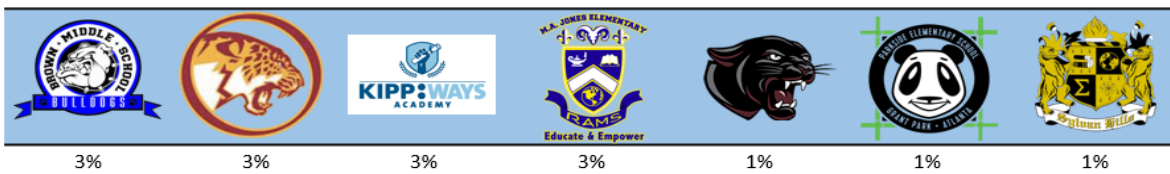
This report focuses on the 102 students served at the main site. About half of the students (46%) were elementary age and 31% were high school students. Students attended nine different schools in the Atlanta Public Schools System. Nearly all the students (94.1%) attended schools in the Booker T. Washington High School Cluster: 55% attended Hollis Innovation Academy and 30% attended Booker T. Washington High School. Between October 2020 and May 2021, Raising Expectations held 88 sessions.

Schools that Raising Expectations Students Attend

85% of Raising Expectations' students attend...



With the rest attending...



Academic Support

Around 70% of the students served by Raising Expectations received either medium or high contact support as they attended face-to-face programming at least two days per week. *Over the course of the school year, there was a steady increase in the number of students served face-to-face. This shows that families and students recognized the benefit of greater engagement with Raising Expectations and chose more frequent face-to-face interactions.* This combined with high levels of participation resulted in increases in academics across all grade levels.

- Elementary students' grades *increased in 80% of the subjects with a 14.5 point increase in Business/Computer Science* and an overall average grade increase of 4.0 points.
- Middle school students' grades *increased in 62.5% of the subjects with a 10.9 point increase in Science and 16.2 point increase in Social Studies* and an overall average grade increase of 4.6 points.
- Overall, high school students' grades increased in *71% of the subjects with a 19.7 point increase in Economics/Business/Comp Science, a 7.1 point increase in English/Literature, and a 6.5 point increase in Math* with an overall average grade increase of 4.1 points.
- The average *overall grade increase was equivalent to half a letter grade.*

Socio-Emotional Impact

Students were surveyed about the support they received from RE. *Students felt very supported by Raising Expectations.* Nearly all students (91%) felt assured that they will receive support from RE whenever they have a problem, believed RE can help them with school problems (89%), and felt supported by RE (87%). During focus groups, students elaborated on how Raising Expectations supported them:

"During my time with Raising Expectations, I have been and still am being helped with many things [whether] it be homework, schoolwork, personal issues, or even with issues. I can simply come to them for just regular conversations."

"If your family is going through a hard time—people who lost their jobs and all that—they will pitch in and help offer your family food and help you [with] housing."

Attitudes About Post-Secondary Education

Students were asked if Raising Expectations impacted their plans after high school. The findings showed a statistically significant increase in students' attitudes about college and trade school with the presence of RE compared to without RE. Students were more likely to want to go to college/trade school, felt more prepared to go to college/trade school, knew what they needed to do to attend college or trade school, and had the support they needed because of Raising Expectations. During focus groups, students shared the love and support they felt from staff members:

"By pushing us so hard, putting support in us so much, having hope for us, giving us the support that we need to push ourselves."

"They got a lot of love for us... They get us to go above and beyond—it's because of the love that they have for us."

Post-Secondary Matriculation

There were nine seniors supported by Raising Expectations during the 2020 – 2021 school year. *89% of the Class of 2021 will continue their education after graduation.*

Access to Technology

Students responded to a series of questions about their access to technology and their transition from an in-person to a virtual classroom. The findings showed a *significant increase in students' owning a computer/tablet to complete their schoolwork, having access to a computer/tablet or internet, and having the help needed to learn and complete schoolwork in a virtual classroom with the support of RE.*

Impact on Caregivers

Caregivers were asked two questions to learn where else they might have received support. Only 16% of caregivers responded that another program supported them and only 24% of caregivers had another individual that supported their family. These results indicate that *Raising Expectations is the primary source of support for most of the families they serve.* Similar to the students' perceptions, levels of agreement were the highest in the caregivers' perception of feeling supported by RE (100%), feeling assured that they will receive support from RE whenever they have a problem (100%), and RE helping their child with school problems (96%). During a focus groups caregivers shared the following:

"I'm a single parent so the fact that they're doing stuff [with my children] that's something that I value, and they stepped in, the things that they do. Like I said, they understand the situation at home. They reach out and contact you."

Impact of COVID-19

Students were provided a series of statements and were asked to select which one applied to them or their family after March 2020 (the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic). The most frequently selected choices indicated that students felt worried about the future (53%), were bothered about not being able to be with friends (51%), and lost a family member (40%) since the beginning of the pandemic. As a result of COVID-19, there was a 125% increase in the number of caregivers who had their work hours reduced, a 90% increase in caregivers needing food for their family, and an 83% increase in caregivers who lost a family member.

Providing Family Stability

The support provided by Raising Expectations was timely given the difficulties families faced. Raising Expectations provided support that aided in stabilizing 77 families. *Raising Expectations provided families with a total of \$56,594 in rent and utility assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.* Many families were supported multiple times so in total,

- 196 individuals benefited from the rent and mortgage assistance
- 394 benefited from the utility assistance
- 469 individuals received assistance with basic necessities
- 65 individuals received employment assistance.

Raising Expectations' Impact on Students

Academic Support Provided

Traditional Raising Expectations academic engagement focuses on STEM and college coaching in an after-school or summer environment. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Raising Expectations modified their traditional program offerings to provide support across both core and elective subjects to ensure that students attended classes, addressed technical issues, and completed school assignments.

This was a much needed change to their programming given the low percentage of students across the country accessing and engaging in virtual classrooms. A report concerning virtual classroom participation in Los Angeles United School District found that “participation by students who are Black, Hispanic or Latino, living in low-income households, classified as English learners, have a disability, or are homeless or in foster care consistently lagged behind their more advantaged peers.”¹ The researchers’ analysis found that between 44% and 60% of Black and Hispanic students submitted at least one assignment during the last nine weeks of the 2019 – 2020 school year. This “weekly participation by Black and Hispanic students has been 10 to 20 percentage points lower than their peers.”¹ Given the low participation across the country, specifically for the groups served by Raising Expectations, intense support with attending classes, addressing technical issues, and completing school assignments was needed.

Staff members shared how their responsibilities have shifted to support and accommodate students during the COVID-19 pandemic:

“I spend a lot of time communicating with parents and teachers. Since COVID, there has been a lot of communication with the technology specialist at our schools, making sure the kids have the technology that they need: computer repairs or running up to the school to exchange a broken computer.”

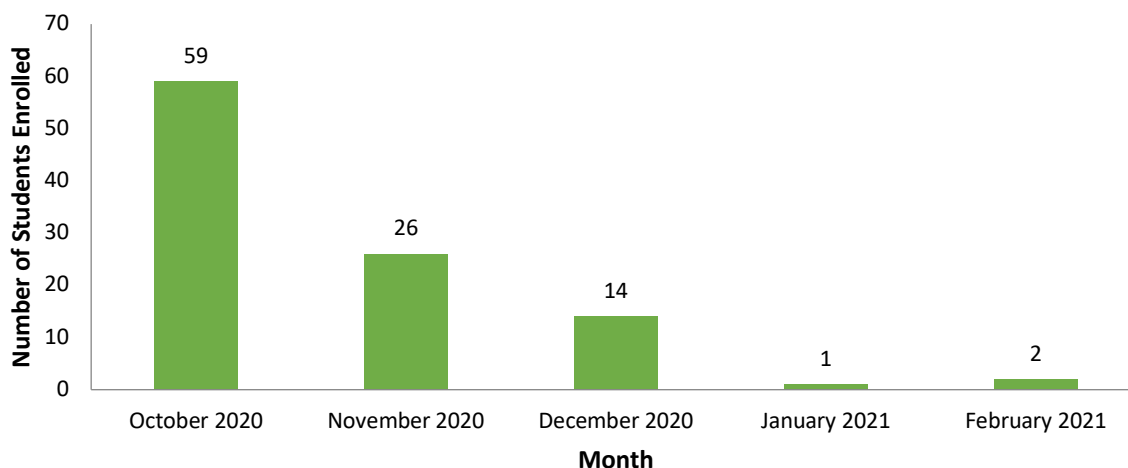
“I am spending about an equal share of time working with students, as well as speaking to parents and teachers. For me, in the high school space, I am making sure that my students are taking care of their priorities when it comes to academics, making sure that their grades are better... If that scenario does not happen, then I am spending that same time working with parents and making sure that the parents are aware and are on board with what our game plan is.”

Students Served

During the 2020 – 2021 school year, Raising Expectations served a total of 102 students. 19 (18.6%) of those students have an IEP (Individualized Education Plan). The figure below provides a chart of student enrollment over time. Raising Expectations began providing face-to-face and hybrid programming in October of 2020, with 59 students. Enrollment efforts were quickly scaled. An additional 26 students enrolled in November and another 14 enrolled in December 2020. Students continued their participation throughout 2021.

¹ Besecker, M. & Thomas, A. (2020) Student Engagement Online During School Facilities Closures: An Analysis of L.A. Unified Secondary Students’ Schoology Activity from March 16 to May 22, 2020.

Month Students Enrolled in Raising Expectations

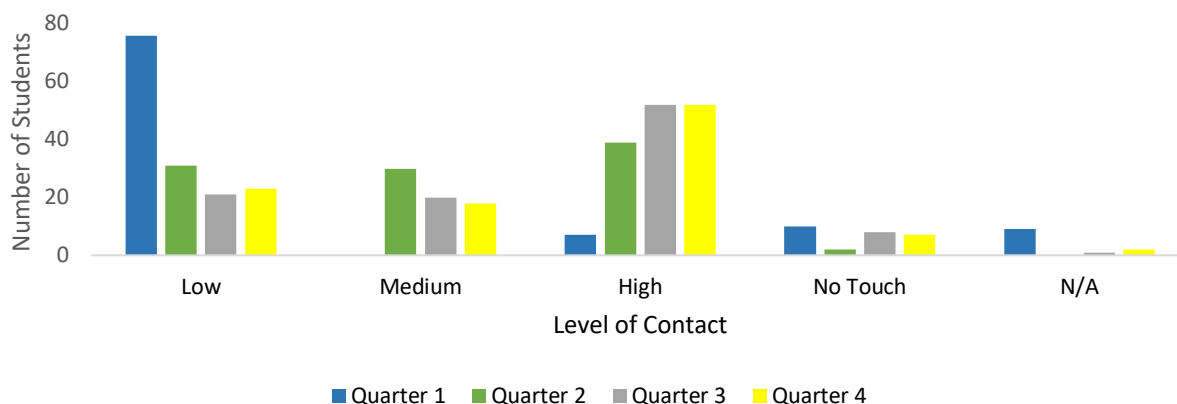


Level of Contact with Students

Raising Expectations provided personalized support to students based on students' needs and the ideal type of engagement. High contact is defined as attending face-to-face programming three or four times per week. Medium contact is defined as attending face-to-face programming two days per week. Low contact students are those who were served via weekly virtual or phone support check-ins. The chart below displays the number of students that Raising Expectations provided high (full-time face-to-face), medium (hybrid), and low-contact (virtual) support.

Most of the students served during the first quarter received low contact support from Raising Expectations via either virtual or telephone contact. During Quarters 2 through 4, most students received either medium or high contact support as they attended face-to-face programming at least two days per week. During Quarter 3, 20% of students received medium and 51% received high contact support. This high level of face-to-face engagement continued during Quarter 4 as 18% of students received medium and 51% received high contact support. *These shifts demonstrate that over time, students and families recognized the benefit of greater engagement with RE staff and chose more frequent face-to-face support.*

Number of Students Served by Level of Contact



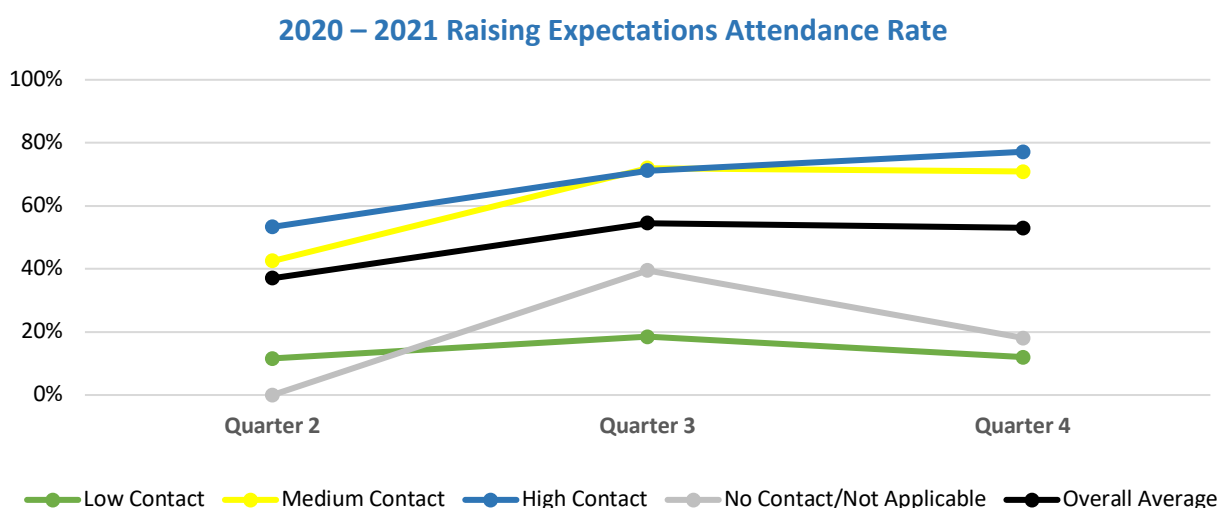
Attendance

Attendance data for October 2020 through May 2021 were provided to determine the average number of sessions students attended. Raising Expectations provides sessions four days per week, excluding school holidays. To analyze attendance data, students were stratified in each quarter by their Raising Expectations contact level. Students that were considered low contact attended or were contacted by RE at least once a week, medium contact students attended at least twice a week, and high contact students attended at least three times a week. The table below provides the total possible days a student attended RE based on their contact level.

	Low Contact	Mid-Contact	High Contact
Quarter 1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Quarter 2	10 Days Minimum	20 – 30 Days	30 or More Days
Quarter 3	9 Days Minimum	18 – 27 Days	27 or More Days
Quarter 4	8 Days Minimum	16 – 24 Days	24 or More Days

*Note: Attendance begins in Quarter 2 as Raising Expectations' programs did not begin programming until October 2020.












After individual attendance rates were calculated, the data were aggregated to the contact level (low, middle, high, and no contact/non-applicable) to determine quarterly attendance rates. *The highest attendance rates were for students that had high contact with Raising Expectation staff as they had an overall average attendance of 67.2% and exceeded the attendance rates for middle and low contact students each quarter. These high levels of participation and engagement demonstrate that both students and caregivers valued the support provided by Raising Expectations, felt connected, and continued to attend their sessions week after week.* Overall, Quarter 3 had the highest attendance rates with 54.5% of students attending.



Grades

To determine the impact of Raising Expectations support on academics, student transcripts were analyzed to determine any changes in student grades over the course of the 2020 – 2021 school year. We divided the impact into three categories: elementary, middle, and high school. Grades were averaged to determine the average grades for each quarter. Finally, the average grade from Quarter 1 to Quarter 4 were compared to determine the percentage of subjects that students improved in and the average improvement. *The average overall grade increase during 2020 – 2021 was equivalent to half a letter grade.*

The table below provides the average grades by subject for the 47 elementary school students served by Raising Expectations. *Overall, elementary school students' grades increased in 80% of the subjects when comparing Quarter 1 to Quarter 4.* The highest increases were in Business/Computer Science, PE, and Other Connections Classes. *Overall, the average grade increased by 3.97 points.*

Elementary School Grades for the 2020 – 2021 School Year (n = 47)						
Subject	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 – Q1	
Math	71.87	73.30	72.30	75.86		3.99
Language Arts	67.91	66.40	66.35	71.72		3.81
Reading	64.90	64.48	66.27	69.48		4.58
Science	74.00	72.15	73.48	76.95		2.95
Social Studies	65.28	69.44	67.79	65.83		0.55
STEM	96.25	76.50	72.33	86.14		10.11
Business/Computer Science	67.50	71.75	64.25	82.00		14.50
PE	83.79	88.52	92.29	98.42		14.63
Health	89.10	90.74	78.21	84.96		4.14
Other Connections	66.55	64.53	85.60	75.53		8.98
Quarter Average	74.72	73.78	73.89	78.69		3.97

We also analyzed grades for the 23 middle school students served by Raising Expectations. *Overall, middle school students' grades increased in 62.5% of the subjects when comparing Quarter 1 to Quarter 4. The highest increases were in Science (10.89 points) and Social Studies (16.21 points).* Middle school students experienced the largest increase in their average grades. *Overall, the average grade increased by 4.61 points.*

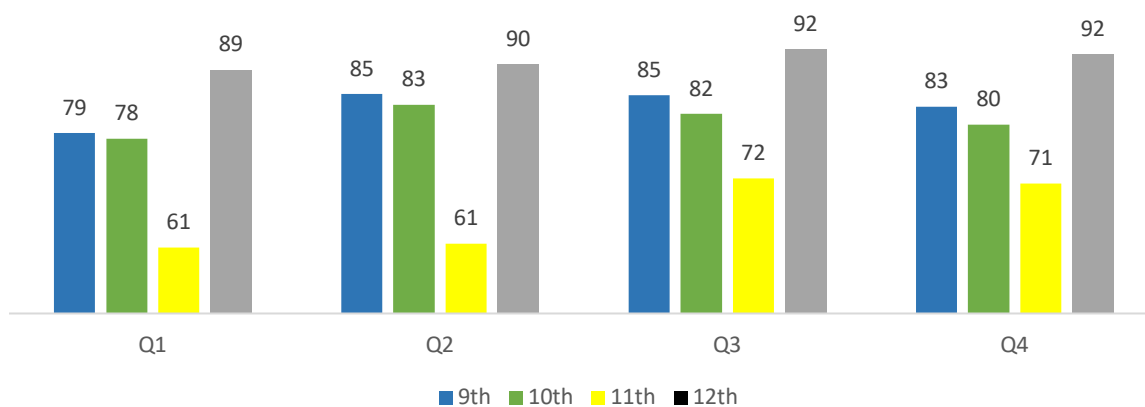
Middle School Grades for the 2020 – 2021 School Year (n = 23)

Subject	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q4 – Q1
Math	83.86	86.27	88.80	90.21	↑	6.35
Language Arts	71.41	70.57	75.73	78.80	↑	7.39
Reading	76.00	76.00	N/A	N/A		0.00
Science	74.64	74.00	73.60	85.53	↑	10.89
Social Studies	64.86	74.82	81.00	81.07	↑	16.21
Business/Computer Science	93.20	89.86	82.60	87.00	↓	6.20
PE/Health	86.33	83.00	94.50	84.00	↓	2.33
Other Connections	65.77	78.36	75.11	70.00	↑	4.23
Quarter Average	77.01	79.11	79.24	81.62	↑	4.61

*Note: For Q3 and Q4, eight middle school students were no longer active in attending RE.

The figure below provides the average grades by grade level for high school students. Seniors had the highest average grades over the course of the school year with averages between 89 and 92. Juniors had the lowest average grades each quarter with an average grade between 61 and 72. The lower grades for nine 11th graders reflect an opportunity for improvement as additional support may be needed for students in these grades.

High School Academic Performance by Grade Level



Finally, we analyzed the average grades by subject for the 32 high school students served by Raising Expectations. *Overall, high school students' grades increased in 71% of the subjects when comparing Quarter 1 to Quarter 4. Students experienced the largest increases in Economics/Business/Computer Science (19.68 points), Other Electives (7.57 points), English/Literature (7.07 points), and Mathematics (6.45 points).* Overall, the average grade increased by 4.11 points.

High School Grades for the 2020 – 2021 School Year (n = 32)

Subject	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 – Q1
Math	71.35	81.19	84.72	77.80	↑ 6.45
English/Literature	71.43	82.45	78.72	78.50	↑ 7.07
Science	87.45	89.31	82.78	80.68	↓ 6.77
Social Studies	68.33	73.3	89.13	74.65	↑ 6.32
Economics/Business/Comp Sci.	69.58	84.60	95.82	89.26	↑ 19.68
Foreign Language	76.13	76.41	80.87	64.57	↓ 11.56
Other Electives	83.55	86.48	92.48	91.12	↑ 7.57
Quarter Average	75.40	81.96	86.36	79.51	↑ 4.11

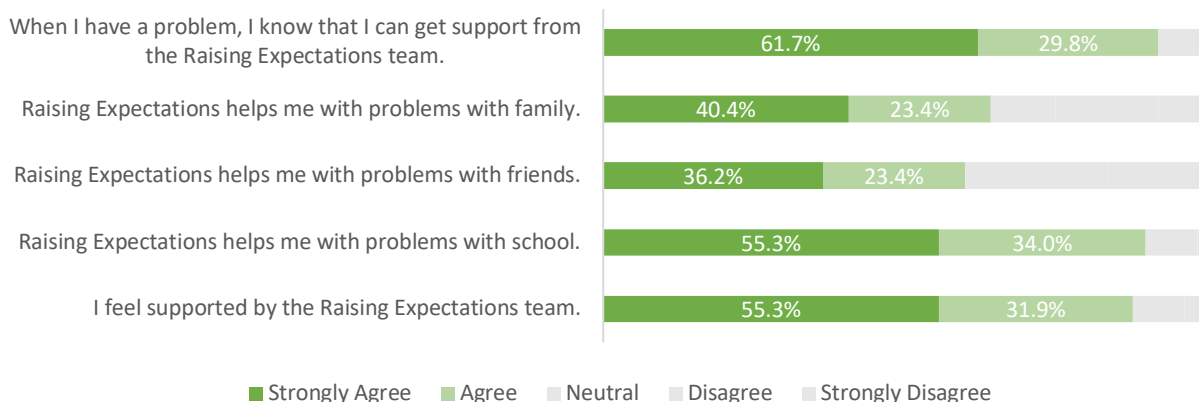
Student Survey Demographics

A total of 47 students completed the RE Student Survey. Middle school-aged students (47%) had the highest participation rate, followed by elementary (28%), and high school (25%) students. The majority of students identified as male (57%) and Black or African American (74%). Students were asked how long they had been participating in Raising Expectations programs. Participation ranges from less than six months to over three years, but 83% of students have participated in RE for more than a year.

Perceived Support from RE

Several questions on the student survey measured students' perceived support from Raising Expectations. Students were asked to report their level of agreement of how RE has supported them on a Likert scale of "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." Overall, students highly agreed that they felt that Raising Expectations was supportive. *Students reported the highest levels of agreement with feeling supported by RE (87%), RE helping them with school problems (89%), and feeling assured that they will receive support from RE whenever they have a problem (91%).*

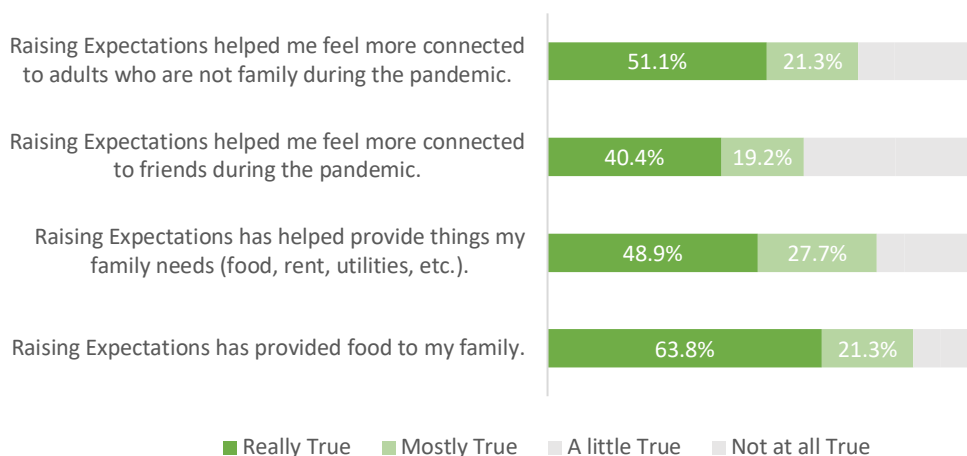
Students' Perception of Raising Expectations Support



The students reinforced feeling supported by RE when providing specific examples of how RE has helped them. Many of the examples referenced Raising Expectations' assistance with academic support and accessing resources for students and their families. One student stated, *"During my time with Raising Expectations, I have been and still am being helped with many things [whether] it be homework/schoolwork, personal issues, or even with issues I can simply come to them for just regular conversations."* Another student emphasized the comprehensive support of RE by stating that *"they help me with anything I need help with no matter what it is."* Students also shared the ways RE has supported their family: *"If your family is going through a hard time—like a hole or anything, people who lost their jobs and all that—they will pitch in and help offer your family food and help you [with] housing."*

When asked about how RE supports their family, 77% of the students indicated that it was "Mostly True or "Really True" that RE provides resources to their families such as food, rent, and utilities.

Students' Perception of RE Family Support



Students also agreed or strongly agreed that RE helped solve problems with friends (59.57%) and family (63.83%). These findings were further supported in students' open-ended responses. Students mentioned how RE helped them build relationships with families and

friends and strengthen and maintained them through teaching them proper conflict resolution techniques. One student shared that RE teaches “*me ways to be kind to people, [teaches] me ways to build friendships and bonds with people.*”

Access to Technology

Students' access to technology before and after Raising Expectations was evaluated on a Likert scale of “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.” Students responded to a series of questions about their access to technology and their transition from an in-person to a virtual classroom. *The findings showed a significant increase in students’ owning a computer/tablet to complete their schoolwork, having access to a computer/tablet or internet, and having the help needed to learn and complete schoolwork in a virtual classroom with the support of RE.*

These findings are aligned with national data that stated that “At the onset of the pandemic, only 67% of K–12 students had reliable access to computing devices; access levels were particularly low among low-income (52%), Black (58%), and Latino (61%) students.”² Without Raising Expectations, many of the students served by the organization would not have had access to technology, the internet or the tools they needed to complete academic assignments and prevent massive learning losses.

Raising Expectations Impact on Access to Technology

<i>Please tell us how much these statements describe you.</i>	<i>Strongly Agree or Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree or Disagree</i>	<i>p-value</i>
<i>I have a computer/tablet I need to complete my schoolwork.*</i>	70.2%	17.0%	12.8%	p=.0124
	83.0%	12.8%	4.2%	
<i>I have internet access to complete my schoolwork.</i>	80.8%	8.5%	10.7%	NS
	83.0%	10.6%	6.4%	
<i>I have help getting the computer/tablet or internet access needed to do my schoolwork.*</i>	63.8%	17.0%	19.2%	p=.0491
	85.2%	8.5%	6.4%	
<i>I have help learning in the virtual classroom.*</i>	44.7%	23.4%	31.9%	p<.0001
	83.0%	12.8%	4.3%	
<i>I have help completing my schoolwork in the virtual classroom.*</i>	55.3%	19.2%	25.5%	p=.0008
	83.0%	14.9%	2.1%	

Note: Percentages on the top correspond to responses without support from Raising Expectations, and percentages on the bottom correspond to responses with the support of Raising Expectations. Statements with an asterisk () and with green p-values indicate a significant increase with the presence of RE compared to without at $\alpha=.05$.*

Attitudes About Post-Secondary Education

To assess how Raising Expectations impacts attitudes about college, students were asked to indicate how their attitudes about college and trade school differed with and without the presence of RE. Students were given a series of statements and asked to react on a Likert scale of “Not at all True” to “Really True.” The findings showed a statistically significant increase in students’ attitudes about college and trade school with the presence of RE compared to without RE. *Students were more likely to want to go to college/trade school, felt more prepared to go to college/trade school, knew what they needed to do to attend college/trade school, and had the support that they needed because of Raising Expectations.*

² Gao, N. & Hayes, J. (2021). The Digital Divide in Education. Public Policy Institute of California. <https://www.ppic.org/publication/the-digital-divide-in-education/>

Raising Expectations Impact on Attitudes About College

<i>Please tell us how much these statements describe you.</i>	<i>Not at all True or A little True</i>	<i>Mostly True or Really True</i>	<i>P-value</i>
<i>I want to go to college or trade school.*</i>	46.8% 29.8%	53.2% 70.2%	p=.0089
<i>I know what I want to study in college or trade school.</i>	51.1% 34.1%	48.9% 66.0%	NS
<i>I feel prepared to go to college or trade school.*</i>	65.9% 42.6%	34.0% 57.4%	p=.0005
<i>I know what I need to do to go to college or trade school.*</i>	61.7% 44.7%	38.3% 55.3%	p=.0003
<i>I have the support I need to go to college or trade school.*</i>	42.5% 27.7%	57.4% 72.4%	p=.0024

Note: Percentages on the top correspond to responses without support from Raising Expectations, and percentages on the bottom correspond to responses with the support of Raising Expectations. Statements with an asterisk () indicate a significant increase with the presence of RE compared to without at $\alpha=.05$.*

During the focus groups, students discussed how the support of the RE staff and the love they felt have led them to believe in themselves.

“By pushing us so hard, putting support in us so much, having hope for us, giving us the support that we need to push ourselves” (HS female student)

“They got a lot of love for us... They get us to go above and beyond—it's because of the love that they have for us.” (HS female student)

During the focus groups, high school students were asked about their plans after graduation. Most students, 80%, indicated that they were considering attending college.

“Because I want to go to college... I'm already an early college student. I don't have thoughts about dropping out. I work hard. I feel like I should go to college.” (HS female student)

Next, students were asked to describe their job or career aspirations after high school. All high school students participating in the focus group identified one or more career plans. Students identified careers such as an architect, veterinarian, computer engineer, nurse, cosmetologist, neurosurgeon, and professional football player. When asked their reasons for selecting these careers, most students chose careers aligned with their passions and interests. One student shared how his desire to become an architectural engineer and build housing for refugees was inspired by the support and guidance he received from Raising Expectations.

“But architectural engineering, I said that because I was going to do it for people that were refugees—people like us. They didn't achieve that in life because they don't have the connections. They don't have the right people to lead them in the

right way. So, it's like a second chance. It's enabling you to have everything you need to get a second chance in life.” (HS male student)

“I want to be a veterinarian because I love animals. I have no problem with any animal, aggressive or not. I could treat it the same way. It just feels different when you talk to animals.” (HS male student)

During the focus group, students also described ways that RE programming has prepared them for their next steps after graduation. They shared that RE has supported them in professional development, sharing resources, and financial stability.

*“Ms. Jenill taught me how to do resumes for interviews, how to dress...”
(HS male student)*

One student who was interested in graphic design shared how RE staff introduced programs that would provide an introduction to the career he was interested in.

“They told me about applications I can use for graphic design like AutoCAD and they also suggested colleges for me to look into.” (HS male student)

Another student shared how they prepared them for life after high school, *“They taught us how to budget and how to save and stuff like that.” (HS Female student)*

Post-Secondary Matriculation

There were nine seniors supported by Raising Expectations during the 2020 – 2021 school year. **89% of the Class of 2021 will continue their education after graduation attending either a two- or four-year university.** Information about their post-secondary institutions and majors is provided below.



Psychology



Journalism



**Computer Science/
Graphic Design**



Computer Science



Pre-Law



Psychology



**Radiological
Technician**



**Automotive
Engineering**

Raising Expectations' Impact on Caregivers

Caregiver Survey Demographics

A total of 25 caregivers completed the RE Caregiver Survey. All of the caregivers identified as Black or African American, and most participants identified as female (88%) and as single or not married (80%). The caregivers' time in RE varied, but most of their children have participated in Raising Expectation for more than one year (80%). The majority of the caregivers had more than one child who participated in the program, with 40% of caregivers with two children who had participated in RE. Caregivers were asked two questions to learn where else they might have received support. Caregivers were asked if their child participated in other programs that supported them and their family and if other people supported them and their families. Only 16% of caregivers responded that another program supported them and only 24% of caregivers had another individual that supported their family. *These results indicate that Raising Expectations is the primary source of support for most of the families they serve.*

The eight caregivers who participated in a focus group reinforced RE being the main support source for families. About 63% of those parents stated that Raising Expectations was the only program their child participated in. Parents in the focus group had up to three children participating in RE programming for a range of 2 to 15 years.

Support from Raising Expectations

Caregivers were asked to report their level of agreement regarding how RE has supported them and their child on a Likert scale of "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." Overall, caregivers expressed a high level of agreement that they felt that Raising Expectations was supportive. *Similar to the students' perceptions, levels of agreement were the highest in the caregivers' perception of feeling supported by RE (100%), RE helping their child with school problems (96%), and feeling assured that they will receive support from RE whenever they have a problem (100%).* Raising Expectations continues to extend its support to the entire family. Not only have caregivers detailed how RE has supported their child, 100% of caregivers believed that it was "Really True" or "Mostly True" that RE has provided for their family.

In an open-ended response, many caregivers expressed that RE has provided financial assistance to their family and academic support to their child. One caregiver shared RE has helped them in *"raising their kids to be better at getting their education."* Another caregiver stated, *"When I was short on a bill, [RE] helped us out."*

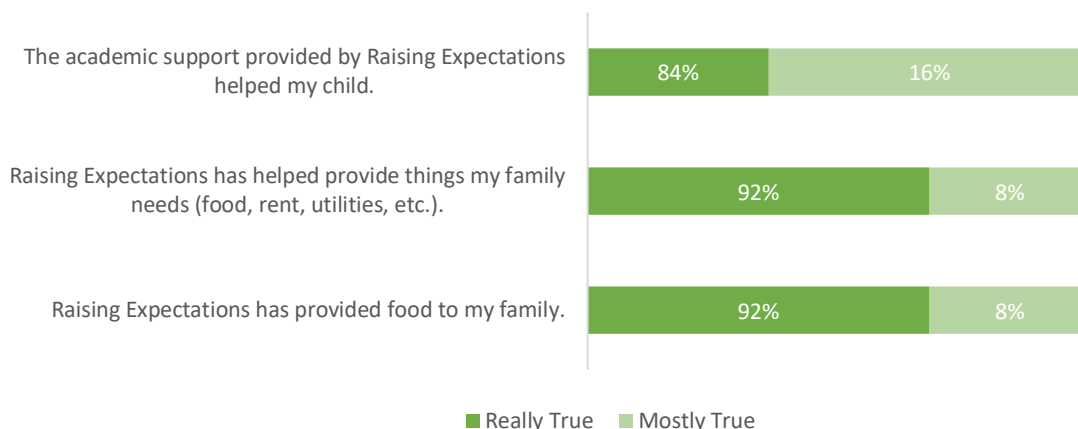
Caregivers from the focus group reiterated the support that RE provided them and their families. When asked to describe RE in three words, caregivers overwhelmingly mentioned "family," which indicates that caregivers view RE as an extension of their family unit. The family-like relationship between RE and the students' families was reinforced during the focus groups. One caregiver shared, *"I'm a single parent so the fact that they're doing stuff [with my children] that's something that I value, and they stepped in, the things that they do. Like I said, they understand the situation at home. They reach out and contact you."*

Likewise, conversations in the focus group centered around caregivers expressing how RE has helped in raising their children. One caregiver stated, *"I know they are not their kids, but they play the role of the other half. So, that is what I like about them. They do so much. If I'm not around, they will tell me that we are a team—we are doing it together."*

Other caregivers reinforced RE’s support to caregivers, noting, *“Not just the children, they check on you as a parent”* and *“They feel like a village raising a child. One village coming together helping raise children. They got your back.”*

In addition, caregivers spoke to the increased level of support that they have received from RE compared to other after-school programming. One caregiver noted, *“When they go to the Boys and Girls Club or baseball, they just go there and come back home; whereas, [Raising Expectations’] contact is like family. They call and check in on how you feel and see what you need. That’s the difference between what they’re doing and the other programs.”*

Caregivers’ Perceptions of Family Support



Attitudes about Post-Secondary Education

Caregivers were also asked to indicate how their attitudes about post-secondary education differed with and without RE. The survey listed a series of statements and caregivers reacted on a Likert scale of “Not at all True” to “Really True.” *The findings showed a significant increase in caregivers' attitudes about college and trade school with the presence of RE compared to without RE.* The results were further stratified by their child's length of enrollment in the program, ranging from less than one year to more than three years. *Over 80% of caregivers responded that it was “Really True” that Raising Expectations has provided the support they need for their child to go to college or trade school.*

These sentiments increased when students were in the program for two or more years. *Caregivers with children enrolled in the program for more than one year saw greater significant changes in their attitudes about post-secondary education than those with children enrolled in the program for less than one year.*

Caregivers' Attitudes about College by Children's Length of Participation



Caregivers in the focus group described how RE's relationship with teachers and their ability to be an additional resource to parents was a great support and determinant for their children's academic success. One caregiver shared, *"They have the communication that we do not have and they give you the answers... They have relationships with the teachers."* Another caregiver mentioned that they appreciate that RE holds *"even the school accountable and the teachers accountable."*

For post-secondary aspirations, caregivers shared experiences with RE staff supporting their child and addressing challenges in college, and exploring different options if they happen to get off track. One caregiver discussed how Raising Expectations supported her son through the challenges of graduating from high school and during a two-year college program. She expressed her gratitude for the Raising Expectations staff who worked alongside her to schedule meetings with school administrators and advocated for her son's success, stating, *"They went down, and they fought for his life... They never gave up on him."*

Providing Family Stability

Raising Expectations provided support that aided in stabilizing 77 families during the 2020 – 2021 school year. *Raising Expectations provided families with a total of \$56,594 in rent and utility assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.* Many families were supported multiple times over the 12-month period so in total,

- 196 individuals benefited from the rent and mortgage assistance
- 394 benefited from the utility assistance
- 469 individuals received assistance with basic necessities
- 65 individuals received employment assistance

The type of stability and support provided to families were based upon the needs that were communicated to Raising Expectations. Every week, a staff member checked in with each family during "wellness checks" to inquire about them and any adversities that they faced

during the pandemic. When a staff member identified a need, a request for assistance was recorded. Staff fulfilled multiple requests for most families over the course of the academic year. There was a total of 487 requests fulfilled by Raising Expectations staff. In some instances, there was a single need (i.e., food). Other requests included multiple needs, (i.e., food, utility assistance, and assistance finding employment). The family stability support included providing food, utility assistance, cleaning supplies/toilet paper, rent assistance, laptops, internet, support with housing applications, and referrals to mental health services.

The 487 requests resulted in Raising Expectations providing 603 unique instances of support to families. The most frequently fulfilled requests were for food (49.4%), utility assistance (16.3%), cleaning supplies/toilet paper (10.3%), and rent assistance (10.3%). A full list of the needs fulfilled and the percentage of requests for that need is provided below.

Need Identified by Family	Number of Instances	Percent of Total Needs
Food	298	49.4%
Utility Assistance	98	16.3%
Cleaning Supplies/Toilet Paper	62	10.3%
Rent Assistance	54	9.0%
Baby Diapers	16	2.7%
Laptop	15	2.5%
Internet	13	2.2%
Housing Security Assistance	16	2.7%
Mental Health Support	8	1.3%
Baby Formula	7	1.2%
Unemployment Assistance	6	1.0%
Furniture	5	0.8%
Referral to Legal Support	2	0.3%
Assistance with Finding a Job	2	0.3%
Over-the-Counter Medication	1	0.2%

Impact of COVID-19

Impact on Students' Lives

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 impacted many individuals' physical and mental health and threatened financial and family stability. Both the student and caregiver survey explored how family stability was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. *Students were provided a series of statements and asked to select which one applied to them or their family after March 2020. The most frequently selected choices indicated that students felt worried about the future (53%), bothered about not being able to be with friends (51%), and lost a family member (40%) since March 2020.* According to the students, their families have experienced similar events and expressed similar emotions since March 2020. Students mentioned that their families felt worried about the future (53%), lost a family member (34%), and felt sad (32%) since the beginning of the pandemic.

Students were asked to describe how RE has supported them during the Covid-19 pandemic. They expressed that Raising Expectations has helped them to stay on track academically by providing a space to focus as well as provide technology resources.

“Sometimes you need to leave home because your internet might not be as good or you might be idling to get work done... So, I come back [to RE, I said], ‘let me focus to do what I got to do.’” (HS male student)

“They gave me an environment I can focus in because when I’m at home, I’m typically lazy because that environment is not right for me to do my work.” (HS male student)

Furthermore, students were asked how RE has helped them to stay connected with others during the pandemic. Students discussed how attending RE made it possible for them to interact with friends and participate in social activities such as the RE *“parties and movies.”* One student reflected on their time spent at RE during the pandemic, *“Keeping us from not going insane.”* Another student agreed, stating, *“Yeah, keeping our mind fit.”*

Impact on Families

Caregivers were asked to select statements that described their family before March 2020 and after March 2020. The majority of the responses demonstrated a percentage increase except for caregivers’ need to find a place to live, which had a 45% decrease, and their need to apply for EBT, SNAP, or unemployment benefits, which saw no change. ***There was a 125% increase in the number of caregivers who had their work hours reduced, a 90% increase in caregivers needing food for their family, and an 83% increase in caregivers who lost a family member.*** The COVID-19 experience for the youth and families in Raising Expectations has been challenging. However, many caregivers have expressed gratitude for the care and assistance that RE has provided, such as financial assistance, food, and academic support, and mentorship to their child. In addition, students shared how the RE staff has helped their families. Students noted personal stories of ways the RE staff has provided food and housing assistance to families when they were in need.

“I keep coming back because they want the best for me. I know they want the best for me because they’ve been [there] for me and my family.” (HS male student)

“If your family is going through a hard time—like a hole or anything, people who lost their jobs and all that—they will pitch in and help offer your family food and help you with housing.” (HS male student)

“I know a family that needed help for housing and all this stuff and Raising Expectations helped them with that.” (HS male student)