

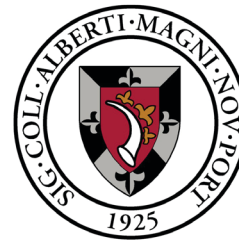


**An Evaluation of the  
Effectiveness of Home Visits  
for Re-Engaging Students  
Who Were Chronically Absent  
in the Era of Covid-19**

DECEMBER 31, 2022

**Center for Connecticut  
Education Research Collaboration**

# Partner Institutions





# **An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Home Visits for Re-Engaging Students Who Were Chronically Absent in the Era of Covid-19**

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# About CCERC

The Center for Connecticut Education Research Collaboration (CCERC) is a research partnership between the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and institutions of higher education across Connecticut. CSDE sets the agenda, identifies projects, and allocates funding for CCERC. The University of Connecticut manages funding and provides an administrative team. A Steering Committee composed of researchers from various Connecticut institutions guides the administrative team in developing and approving research projects and reports. Researchers from Connecticut universities and colleges constitute the research teams. The mission of CCERC is to address pressing issues in the state's public schools through high quality evaluation and research that leverages the expertise of researchers from different institutions possessing varied methodological expertise and content knowledge.

CCERC was formed initially using federal relief funds to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning and well-being and recovery efforts in the state's schools. The partnership was subsequently institutionalized to respond to ongoing evaluation and research needs of the CSDE, provide research opportunities for Connecticut researchers, and foster collaboration across the state's institutions of higher education.





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📷 The Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) was launched in April of 2021 to address student absenteeism and disengagement from school due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (iStock Photo)

# Executive Summary

During the 2015-2016 school year, more than 50,000 students (or 9.6% of children) in Connecticut's public schools met the criteria for being chronically absent (i.e., absent for 10% or more of school days). These numbers represent baseline levels in the state from a time before the COVID-19 global pandemic fundamentally disrupted the practice of schooling, pushing schools and students into emergency remote learning.

The Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) was launched in April of 2021 to address student absenteeism and disengagement from school due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Beginning in the summer of 2021, home visits were conducted with students identified as chronically absent from a targeted sample of 15 districts throughout Connecticut.

In spring 2022, the Center for Connecticut Education Research Collaboration (CCERC) selected a team of researchers from Wesleyan University, Central Connecticut State University, and the University of Connecticut to conduct a mixed-methods study on the LEAP home visit intervention. Post-intervention school attendance rates, after controlling for relevant background variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity), served as the primary quantitative outcome measure. To provide greater context for interpreting the quantita-

## April 2021

The Learner Engagement and Attendance Program is launched

## Summer 2021

Home visits conducted with students identified as chronically absent from a targeted sample of 15 districts

## Spring 2022

Researchers conduct a mixed-methods study on the LEAP home visit intervention.



During the 2015-2016 school year, more than 50,000 students (or 9.6% of children) in Connecticut's public schools met the criteria for being chronically absent (i.e., absent for 10% or more of school days).

tive results, focus groups and interviews were also conducted with over 100 participants that included: (a) district leaders from all 15 LEAP districts (n = 20), (b) home visit providers (n = 44) from within three focal districts in the qualitative study, and (c) families who received home visitations (n = 44) within those same three focal districts. Approximately one-third of the interviews with families were conducted in Spanish. The goal of this mixed-method evaluation was to provide a holistic evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the LEAP home visit intervention. The report is structured and oriented toward six guiding research questions and findings related to each of those questions are summarized below:

1. Who received the LEAP home visits?
2. Who conducted the home visits?
3. Did attendance rates improve for students receiving the LEAP intervention?
4. Did attendance rates vary by grade, student demographics, or type of individual conducting the home visit?
5. What characteristics of the home visits were related to increased student attendance?
6. How did LEAP participants perceive the effectiveness of the program?

## Who Received the LEAP Home Visits?

The results of the quantitative analysis indicated that across the 15 participating districts, a total of 8,690 of students received the intervention. Participating districts were given discretion in terms of how to approach the LEAP home intervention. Across the 15 participating districts, there were four main strategies used in determining who received home visits:

1. Taking a district-wide approach, targeting all chronically absent students in the district
2. Targeting a specific subset of schools that had high levels of chronic absenteeism
3. Targeting students in particular

grade levels, often at critical transition points, during the summer before they transitioned to elementary school, middle school, or high school

4. Targeting a specific demographic of students, such as new immigrants, who have demonstrated a need for extra support related to attendance

## Who Conducted the Home Visits?

The 15 participating districts tended to favor one of two approaches to home visitation. Both models held value for those who embraced them.

The first approach involved the **exclusive use of school personnel**. While teachers were an important focal point, there was no instance in which teachers alone conducted the home visitations. Rather, school personnel only approaches tended to use multi-disciplinary teams consisting of teachers, counselors, administrators, and other staff. The

“*The results of the quantitative analysis indicated that across the 15 participating districts, a total of 8,690 of students received the intervention. Participating districts were given discretion in terms of how to approach the LEAP home intervention.*”

quantitative results revealed that school personnel accounted for 79% of the initial home visitors (25% of whom were teachers and 54% of whom were other district employees).

The second approach taken was to **partner with a community organization** for the home visitations. In some cases, these partnerships were made for pragmatic reasons, such as the increased availability of staff from community organizations and reductions in the number of restrictions on how the LEAP money could be used to incentivize students and parents. The quantitative data reveal that across the 15 participating districts, a total of 20% of the initial home visits were made by non-district employees/community partners.

According to the data from the 100+ participants we interviewed, four main factors were most closely **associated**

## with staff buy-in to the LEAP intervention:

1. Ensuring Home Visitor’s Safety (e.g., visiting homes during a pandemic; going into dangerous neighborhoods)
2. Supporting Districts with Trust and Flexibility (e.g., being allowed to use different models of implementation)
3. Supporting Home Visitor’s Desire for a Deeper Understanding of Student Experiences (e.g., home challenges)
4. Providing Adequate Compensation (e.g., paying people to do something outside of their required workload)

Conversely, participants identified the following three main factors as being most closely associated with burnout or challenge spots with the implementation of LEAP:

1. Overworked Teachers and Delayed and/or Inadequate Compensation for Home Visits (e.g., could not find enough teachers and staff to participate in LEAP even though they were offered a stipend).
2. Conflicting Priorities (e.g., balancing of family life and commitment to work)
3. District Leader Role Confusion Regarding Roles and Responsibilities (e.g., LEAP was coordinated through the Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs); some districts had a positive experience working with them, some did not).

## Did Attendance Rates Improve for Students Receiving the LEAP Intervention?

The results of the quantitative analyses indicate that students who received the LEAP intervention showed a statistically significant increase in their rates of attendance overall relative to pre-intervention rates. Specifically, for the full sample of students treated by LEAP, other than those from New Haven Public Schools, attendance rates increased by approximately four percentage points in the month immediately following the first LEAP visit. Attendance rates then

continued to rise in subsequent months, reaching an average increase of approximately seven percentage points for students treated in the summer of 2021 and nearly 15 percentage points for students treated during the 2021-22 school year in the 6 months or more after treatment. The upward trend was particularly dramatic for Hartford Public Schools where attendance rates increased by nearly 30 percentage points in the 6 months or more after treatment.

In contrast, LEAP appears to have had no impact on attendance rates in New Haven Public Schools. New Haven did not implement the LEAP program as designed. Instead of doing one-on-one individual LEAP visits with students, New Haven contracted out to a non-profit organization who then primarily canvassed neighborhoods that were identified as having high concentrations of chronically absent students. However, based on feedback from the LEAP evaluation team and the Connecticut State Department of Education, New Haven has now made modifications to their LEAP model so it conforms more closely to the models used in other districts. The new model will be implemented during the 2022-23 school year.

## Did Attendance Rates Vary by Grade, Student Demographics, or Type of Individual Conducting the Home Visit?

Nine months after the first LEAP visit, students in grades PK – 5 experienced approximately an eight-percentage point increase in attendance. In contrast, students in grades 6-12 experienced approximately a sixteen-percentage point increase in attendance rates relative to untreated students over the same time period, suggesting that the impact of the LEAP was significantly larger in later grades. Further, the impact of the LEAP treatment was remarkably similar across students with different demographic or socioeconomic characteristics. The one exception was English Language Learners (ELL students) who had treatment effects that were only approximately half as large as the other groups (e.g., non-ELL students).

## What Characteristics of the Home Visits were Related to Increased Student Attendance?

From the perspective of the quantitative analysis, there appeared to be only minimal heterogeneity in LEAP's impact based on the type of personnel conducting a LEAP home visit. For students treated during the 2021-22 school year, nine months after the initial LEAP visit attendance rates increased by approximately 15 percentage points regardless of who conducted the visit. However, the data did reveal some significant evidence of variation in the impact of LEAP visits across location. LEAP visits that occurred at a student's home had significantly larger impacts on attendance than LEAP visits that occurred via Zoom or phone. LEAP visits at a student's school also had larger impacts on attendance relative to Zoom or phone visits.

From the qualitative perspective, an analysis of the interview data gathered from home visit providers and families generated six themes they believed to be important in increasing student attendance outcomes:

1. Personalized, Dynamic Support: Dependent on Family's Needs
2. Continued Training and Support for the Visitors
3. A Process of Collaboration (e.g., Determining Caseload Assignments)
4. Home Visitor Fluency in the Language Used in the Home
5. Commitment to Establishing Connections with Families
6. Collaborative Advocacy for Students (e.g., Parents, Home Visitors)

## How Did LEAP Participants Perceive the Effectiveness of the Program?

As noted previously, three main constituencies were interviewed in the context of the qualitative investigations. These included district leaders from the 15 participating districts (n = 20), home visit providers (n = 44) from three focal

districts, and families who received home visits (n = 44) from the same focal districts. These constituencies had different perceptions of what worked well and what the challenges were with regard to LEAP. From the **perspective of the district leaders**, there were two main points of effectiveness and four challenges. The two **main points of effectiveness** were:

1. Opportunities to Collaborate and Learn from Other Districts via the RESCs and CSDE
2. Flexibility from the State in Terms of How to Implement LEAP and use Funds

In addition, the district leaders noted the following **challenges**:

1. Funding (late arrival of funding for the project delayed work)
2. Staffing (finding people to do the work)
3. Sustainability (2-3 year commitment more helpful than short/large infusions of resources)
4. Unwillingness to Learn from What Worked During Covid

From the **perspective of view of the home visitors and the families**, they noted eight main benefits and three main challenges associated with LEAP. The **benefits** of LEAP included:

1. Improved Family-School Relationships
2. Increased Student Attendance
3. Increased Student Engagement
4. Increased Student Achievement
5. Increased Feelings of Belonging
6. Increased Access to Resources for Families
7. Increased Expectations of Accountability
8. Greater Gratitude and Appreciation

The challenges associated with LEAP were:

1. Resistant Teachers
2. Resistant Families
3. Fearful Families (e.g., Afraid of Deportation)



# Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the evaluation showed a significant increase in attendance rates for students receiving the LEAP intervention relative to a strong control group (the students themselves over time). Further, the effects are long-lasting - up to six months post-treatment - and longer-term follow-up studies are warranted to replicate these findings and further extend these analyses. The quantitative results showed particularly strong effects of the LEAP intervention at the middle and high school levels. Future research in which the strategies used by districts are systematically and quantitatively indicated and controlled for and perhaps compared across a larger number of districts may be useful. In addition, given that districts were not randomly selected to participate in LEAP, but rather shared common features, those features may interact with the nature of the results in ways that are difficult to disentangle in the present study. Further, **implementation evaluations** of the fidelity of the LEAP intervention may provide useful information about variation across sites that could lead to a deeper understanding of the results.

One recommendation would be for the CSDE to hire a single person to coordinate data collection for LEAP at the state level and to work with districts to develop a **standardized data collection**

**plan** that helps to support, ensure, and monitor the consistency in data collection of important indicators across districts. This approach would be similar to those taken in large scale international assessments such as TIMSS, PIRLS, and PISA. Districts whose data do not meet certain quality control standards could be indicated by an asterisk, thereby enhancing the validity of the quantitative results.

Perhaps the most important point raised by district leaders, home visitors and families is that efforts to re-engage students who are chronically absent requires a sustained commitment over time. While large infusions of funding can greatly help to support, and in some cases, jumpstart the process, because the primary cost of the intervention is largely in terms of human capital, sustained funding is likely a more effective approach to intervention. There are additional costs to short-term funding in terms of: (a) reduced participant buy-in, (b) increased difficulties with staff recruiting, and (c) eroded trust from the community that comes from seeing a successful intervention disappear shortly after it is launched.

Ultimately, the vast majority of the 100+ **participants**

**interviewed saw LEAP as tremendously valuable.** In addition, they were highly appreciative of the efforts made by the state and federal government to support schools and students throughout Connecticut. Participants appreciated the cooperative spirit shown by the CSDE in terms of its willingness to work together with districts rather than to force mandates from the top-down. Such an approach facilitated buy-in at every level. Furthermore, the **climate of sharing and cooperation among the participating districts**, cultivated and supported by the Regional Educational Service Center (RES-C) Alliance and CSDE was one of the most important benefits perceived by participants. Therefore, one recommendation we have is for the State to **continue providing high-quality and continuous professional development in this area.** The feeling of shared purpose centered around re-engaging students in schooling was palpable at every level of participant with whom we spoke.

In sum, this mixed-methods evaluation analyzed quantitative data from 8,690 students across 15 districts spanning K-12 education and incorporated qualitative interview data from 108 participating district leaders, home visitors, and families, making it one of the largest and

most robust studies of a home visit program ever conducted. Although it should be noted that the qualitative results were mainly drawn from a non-representative sample from three of the participating LEAP districts and may therefore not be representative of the entire program, the findings are profound. Furthermore, the objective quantitative results from all 15 participating LEAP districts shows that Connecticut's home visit program is clearly effective, leading to an average increase in attendance rates of nearly 15 percentage points for students treated during the 2021-22 school year in the 6 months after treatment. Furthermore, the effect of LEAP was particularly dramatic for Hartford Public Schools where attendance rates increased by nearly 30 percentage points in the 6 months or more after treatment. LEAP appears to have been a successful effort, developed rapidly and supported with ingenuity and flexibility. While there were certainly several challenge points noted that point to areas for where the program can be refined in the future, the effort appears to have been effective overall in its first year. Future research is warranted to further explore the differential impact of the various dimensions identified in this report and to examine the lasting effects of the LEAP.

“*The results of the evaluation showed a significant increase in attendance rates for students receiving the LEAP intervention relative to a strong control group (the students themselves over time).*”

# Full Report

During the 2015-2016 school year, more than 50,000 students (9.6% of children) in Connecticut's public schools met the criteria for being chronically absent (i.e., absent for 10% or more of school days)<sup>1</sup>. These numbers represent baseline levels in the state from a time before the COVID-19 global pandemic disrupted the practice of schooling, pushing schools and students into emergency remote learning.

The Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) was launched in April of 2021 to address student absenteeism and disengagement from school due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Beginning in the summer of 2021, LEAP home visits were conducted with students identified as chronically absent from a targeted sample of 15 districts throughout Connecticut.

The current report presents the results of a mixed-methods evaluation of the effectiveness of the LEAP intervention. After controlling for relevant background variables (e.g., student's gender, race / ethnicity, free lunch eligibility status, English learner status, special education status, etc.), post-intervention school attendance rates served as the primary quantitative outcome measure. To provide greater context for interpreting the quantitative results, focus groups and interviews were also conducted with over 100 participants from three different constituencies: (a) district leaders from all 15 LEAP districts (n = 20), (b) home visitors (n = 44) from within three focal districts in the qualitative study, and (c) families who received home visits (n = 44) within those same three focal districts. The report is structured around six guiding research questions: 1) Who received the home visits? 2) Who conducted the home visits? 3) Did attendance rates for LEAP participants differ from baseline? 4) Did the attendance impact vary by grade, student demographics, or type of individual conducting the home visit? 5) What characteristics of home visits increased student attendance? and

6) What were the perceptions of LEAP participants (strengths and challenges)?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Who Typically Receives Home Visits?

Home visit programs have historically tended to differ in their target intervention groups. For example, underserved communities have been a primary target for the implementation of home visit programs, such as with low socioeconomic status districts or families (Bierman, Heinrichs, Welsch, Nix, & Gest, 2016; St. Pierre & Layzer, 1999), or families from an immigrant or language minority background (Johnson, 2014). However, home visit programs have also targeted students in particular age groups, such as early elementary school (Meyer & Mann, 2006; Meyer, Mann, & Becker, 2011), as well as those in transitional periods of their educational experience, such as the transition from preschool to kindergarten (Bierman et al., 2016). Home visit interventions targeted at student absenteeism extend past solely elementary age groups, as high school students have also been targeted in home visit programs. Targeting high school absenteeism is deemed necessary as absenteeism among high schoolers has been negatively associated with attitudes towards academic performance (Balkis, Arslan, & Duru, 2016).

Other times, home visits have been introduced based on characteristics related to a student's performance in school, including those identified as having academic or behavioral difficulties (Stetson, Stetson, Sinclair, & Nix, 2012), and those that were chronically absent (Cook et al., 2017). In other cases, the implementation of these programs has been more general, and instead has targeted multiple schools across a district without specifically targeting any particular demographic (Sheldon & Jung, 2018; Wright et al., 2018).

### Who Typically Conducts Home Visits?

Although past studies on the value of home visits have tended to differ in their target intervention groups, the vast majority of them used teachers to conduct the interventions (Cook et al., 2017; Johnson, 2014; Meyer & Mann, 2006; Meyer et al., 2011; Stetson et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2018), with only one study mentioning paraprofessionals as the intervention group (St. Pierre & Layzer, 1999). While this brief review of previous literature is not necessarily representative of all research conducted on home intervention programs, it does demonstrate a pattern in which teachers are traditionally relied upon to conduct home interventions.

### What Are the Outcomes of Home Visits?

Overall, while previous literature may have differed in their target intervention groups, a positive effect on student outcomes produced by home visits was noted in nearly all of the previously mentioned studies (Bierman et al., 2016; Cook et al., 2017; Johnson, 2014; Meyer & Mann, 2006; Meyer et al., 2011; Sheldon & Jung, 2018; Stetson et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2018). Specifically considering chronic absenteeism, Jordan (2020) found that students and families who are visited by a teacher at least once during the school year were 21% less likely to have chronically absent children. Additionally, schools were able to decrease their rate of chronic absenteeism when at least 10% of their student population was included in the home visit program. These visits were demonstrated to be most effective with the families of elementary school aged children.

These findings hold true in a variety of research contexts. For example, Cook et al. (2017) demonstrate that The Early Truancy Prevention Program, which was formed to prevent absenteeism among first and second grade students and

1 Connecticut State Department of Education (2017). Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut's Schools: A Prevention and Intervention Guide for Schools and Districts. Downloaded 02.20.22 at: [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Chronic-Absence/Prevention\\_and\\_Intervention\\_Guide.pdf?la=en](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Chronic-Absence/Prevention_and_Intervention_Guide.pdf?la=en)

aimed at strengthening parent-teacher relationships, had positive implications for student attendance. Through home visits, teachers were given the opportunity to communicate to their students' parents about their child's absenteeism. After discovering the cause of absenteeism, the teacher was able to implement a plan to improve the student's attendance, which often involved frequent communication between the parent and teacher. Overall, the student's attendance improved significantly for first and second graders by approximately 10% across 40 schools.

Lahti et al. (2018) explored Parents as Teachers (PAT) which is another early in-home intervention that increases parental knowledge on child development, parenting skills, and school success which begins at pregnancy and lasts until the child is ready for kindergarten. In this intervention, the parent is visited by a "parent educator" or culturally competent, bilingual individuals who provide the parent with resources like community activities and share resources available in the community. Parents' involvement with the community led to increased involvement with their child's learning and support in their child's attendance as resources were utilized and connections to the school were understood. Also, as parents received knowledge of their child's development, their child's cognitive abilities were understood and their social-developmental skills tended to improve, increasing school readiness by kindergarten.

Regarding the specific home visit interventions, discussed by Soule and Curtis (2021), within urban diverse high schools, high school teachers that visited their students' homes were able to gain a better understanding of their students' life at home. Specifically, the teachers improved their understanding of their students' cultures, background, struggles, and fears. These interventions resulted in improved parent-teacher relationships and follow-ups with the students and their families to relieve anxieties and provide a plan for success. Teachers who participated in the home visit program reported that their relationships with parents were signifi-

cantly more positive compared to the teachers who did not participate, which is demonstrated by the fact that teachers who went on home visits were more likely to set up meetings with parents. Teachers noticed that the home visits also improved students' connectedness with their school and their peers. Furthermore, the study found that students who were part of the home visit model were more likely to graduate on time.

### **What Are the Perceptions of Those Conducting and Receiving Home Visits?**

Home visits have been especially helpful for families who do not speak English as their first language (Jordan, 2020). Parents who struggle with English tend to lack comfort in reaching out to their child's school. The American education system lacks explanation in its functionality to immigrant parents, and, as a result, parents often do not know what they need to do to help their child in school (Moles, 1993). An in-home intervention for kindergarten students found that after its intervention, non-English speaking parents understood the education system more clearly and were aware of what their child needed to succeed. As these parent-teacher relationships improved, their children's academic performance and attendance increased as their engagement with their teachers and peers rose (Schulting, 2009).

In-home interventions can be overwhelming and nerve-racking to parents of young children. Specifically, Stetson et al. (2012) demonstrated that the parents who participated in an in-home intervention that targeted elementary students in urban North Texas who were predominantly Hispanic and of low socioeconomic status were initially intimidated or even suspicious about why a teacher would need to come to their home. Their first thought was often that their child had gotten in trouble. After getting past their initial anxieties, 84% of teachers said that the visits had at least a moderately positive impact on their relationship with parents. During the visits, the parent(s) and teacher identified common goals, which aided in communication and allowed for conversations to veer

from defensive to more personal. Most teachers agreed that it was the relationship fostered with the parents that caused the dramatic improvements in their students.

Not only did this intervention positively impact teacher-parent relationships, but there was an overwhelming positive impact on teacher-student relationships (Stetson et al., 2012). Most teachers also found that their students had improved work habits and academic achievements because of the communication and collaboration of the home visits (Stetson et al., 2012). Overall, teachers found these visits to be important because of the empathy they developed for the family. They were able to directly witness the hardships that their students and families faced, such as poor nutrition, lack of parental involvement, and difficult living conditions. The visits made teachers want their students to succeed even more, but also had a positive effect on the students' motivation to succeed (Stetson et al., 2012).

### **Summary**

Overall, the recent literature on the topic is overwhelmingly supportive of home visit programs outcomes, finding that they lead to an increase in attendance, academic achievement, stronger student-teacher and parent-teacher relationships, and student engagement and connectedness. Nevertheless, it is important to note the gap in literature on the impact of home visit programs in the unique context of a global pandemic. Particularly in this situation, the reasons for chronic absenteeism may range beyond what has previously been found and reported in the literature. It is worth noting, that in this context, students may have different reasons for being chronically absent that extends beyond what has been traditionally understood. Thus, an exploration of the effectiveness of a home visit program, such as LEAP, is warranted.

## METHODS

A mixed-methods approach to evaluation was adopted in which quantitative data from all participating districts was obtained from the Connecticut State Department of Education. In addition, focus-groups and interviews were conducted with district leaders from all 15 LEAP districts and with home visitors and families drawn from a focal sample of three participating districts. The details of each methodology are described below.

### Research Questions

1. Who received the LEAP home visits? For example, what was the profile of LEAP participants (e.g., gender, ethnicity, attendance/performance)?
2. Who conducted the home visits?
3. Did attendance rates improve for students receiving the LEAP intervention?
4. Did attendance rates vary by grade, student demographics, or type of individual conducting the home visit?
5. What characteristics of the home visits were related to increased student attendance (e.g., in-person at home v. other location, number of visit)?
6. How did LEAP participants perceive the effectiveness of the program? What did district officials, home visitors and parents/guardians receiving the home visits feel worked well and what was most challenging?

### Quantitative Methods

#### Sample

Our primary source of data comes from individual student attendance records maintained by the 15 school districts that participated in LEAP. These data were provided to us by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

#### Instrumentation

Records maintained by the school districts include information on: (a) the number of days a student attended school in each month; (b) the total number of school days in each month; (c) the date of the first LEAP visit; (d) the loca-

tion of the visit; (e) information on who conducted the visit (e.g. teacher, guidance counselor, etc.); (f) the number of follow-up visits (if any); (g) the location of follow-up visits; and (h) information on who conducted the follow-up visit. Using these data, we constructed each student's monthly attendance rate as the ratio of the number of days of school attended each month divided by the total number of school days in that month.

#### Procedures

We merged the student attendance and LEAP participation data described above with student administrative data from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) using each student's unique identification code. The CSDE administrative data includes information on each student's: (a) gender; (b) race and ethnicity; (c) free and / or reduced-price lunch eligibility status; (d) English language learner status; (e) special education status; (f) grade-level; and g) prior academic performance on either the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) for students in elementary or middle school or the SAT for students in high school.

#### Analysis Strategy

Using the data outlined above, we used a difference-in-differences (DiD) framework to isolate the causal impact of LEAP on student attendance. Our DiD framework compared the difference in attendance rates among LEAP engaged students (treatment group) before and after a LEAP visit to the difference in attendance rates among students not treated by LEAP (control group), both before and after treatment.

In the current context, however, finding an appropriate control group that has similar attendance rates and trends in monthly attendance prior to the introduction of LEAP was challenging given that students treated by LEAP were chronically absent prior to treatment and thus, likely different from other students along a host of both observable and unobservable characteristics. To address this issue, we limited our sample to all students that were treated by LEAP between the summer of 2021 and June of 2022. We then implemented our DiD

framework by exploiting the staggered timing of treatment (i.e., the fact that students were treated in different months throughout the 2021-22 school year) and used students treated in later months (e.g., May or June of 2021) as the control (or counterfactual group) for students treated earlier.

We began by presenting a non-parametric difference-in-differences event study of the following form:

$$y_{igst} = \sum_{j=-6}^6 \gamma_j T_{j,it} + \mathbf{X}_i \theta_t \kappa + \delta_i + \lambda_{gst} + \eta_{igst},$$

(1)

where  $y_{igst}$  denoted the attendance rate for student  $i$ , in grade  $g$  and district  $s$ , in month  $t$ ,  $T_{(j,it)}$  represents a series of monthly lead and lag indicators for when student  $i$  was treated by LEAP,  $\delta_i$  is a vector of student fixed effects,  $\lambda_{gst}$  is a vector of grade-by-district-by-month fixed effects, and  $\eta_{igst}$  is a random disturbance term. In all specifications, we clustered the standard errors at the grade-by-district-by-month level.

We re-centered  $T_{(j,it)}$  so that  $T_{(0,it)}$  always equals one in the month a student was treated. We included a series of indicators from 0 to 6 months prior to treatment ( $T_{(-6,it)}$  to  $T_{(-1,it)}$ ), and a series of indicators for 1 to 6 months after treatment ( $T_{(1,it)}$  to  $T_{(6,it)}$ ). Note:  $T_{(-6,it)}$  equals one in all months 6 or more prior to treatment and similarly,  $T_{(6,it)}$  equals one in all months 6 or more after treatment. The omitted category for our treatment indicators (i.e. the reference month for all estimates) is the month of treatment ( $T_{(0,it)}$ ).

The coefficients of primary interest in equation (1) are the  $\gamma_j$ 's. The estimated coefficients on the lead treatment indicators ( $\gamma_{(-6)}, \dots, \gamma_{(-1)}$ ) provided evidence on whether the parallel trends assumption, which underlies all causal claims based on DiD models, appears to hold. If participation in LEAP induces exogenous changes in student attendance rates (i.e., if the change in attendance was attributed to factors other than LEAP), these lead treatment indicators should be small in magnitude and statistically insignificant, implying that prior to treatment, students treated by LEAP

have similar outcomes to students not treated by LEAP. The lagged treatment indicators ( $\gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_9$ ) allowed the effect of LEAP on attendance rates to grow over time and in a nonparametric way in the post treatment period.

In most specifications, we also included a vector of control variables ( $\mathbf{X}_i$ ), which includes a student's gender, race and ethnicity, free lunch eligibility status, English learner status and special education status. Because these student characteristics are time-invariant we interact them with a linear time trend,  $\theta_i$  to allow for differential trending in attendance rates over time by these characteristics.

Several recent studies have shown that DiD and event study specifications relying on the staggered timing of treatment for identification may be biased in the presence of heterogeneous treatment effects due to the contamination of treatment effects from early versus later adopters from other relative time periods (Callaway & Sant'Anna, 2021; Goodman-Bacon, 2021; Sun & Abraham, 2021) To overcome that problem, we estimate cohort-specific, average treatment effects on the treated (CATT) using the estimator developed by Sun and Abraham (2021).<sup>2</sup>

To improve the precision, we complemented the event study specification given by equation (1) with a difference-in-differences (DiD) specification of the following form:

$$y_{igst} = \beta_1 \text{Treat}_{it} + \beta_2 (\text{Treat}_{it} * \text{Trend}_t) + \mathbf{X}_i \theta_i \kappa + \delta_i + \lambda_{gst} + \varepsilon_{igst}$$

(2) where  $\text{Treat}_{it}$  is an indicator that takes the value of one in the month a student is treated by LEAP. For every month after the treatment month through the end of the school year,  $\text{Treat}_{it} * \text{Trend}_t$  is the treatment indicator interacted with a linear time trend that counts (linearly) the number of months since treatment.  $\varepsilon_{igst}$  is a random disturbance term, and all

other terms were as defined in equation (1).

The coefficients of primary interest in equation (2) are  $\beta_1$  and  $\beta_2$ . Specifically,  $\beta_1$ , the coefficient on the binary treatment indicator,  $\text{Treat}_{it}$ , captured any initial “jump” in attendance in the month immediately following a LEAP visit. Similarly,  $\beta_2$ , the coefficient on the linear post treatment trend variable,  $\text{Treat}_{it} * \text{Trend}_t$ , captured any incremental monthly growth in attendance that may occur post treatment. Our decision to include both a standard DiD “jump” variable and a linear post treatment trend variable in (2) stemmed from the fact that the impact of LEAP on attendance is likely to evolve over time, particularly since most students receive a follow-up visit after their initial LEAP visit, which likely reinforces the effect of treatment on attendance.

To address any bias in our estimated treatment effects due to the staggered timing of treatment and potential for heterogeneous treatment effects, we followed Cengiz et al. (2019) and Goodman and Bacon's (2021) estimate equation (2) using a stacked DiD framework. Specifically, we first created a set of datasets that included observations from a cohort of students that were treated by LEAP in the same month and all students that were treated by LEAP in a later month.<sup>3</sup> We then appended (stacked) these cohort-specific datasets and estimated models similar to equation (2), except we replaced the student fixed effects with student-by-cohort fixed effects.

For both the event study model given by equation (1) and the DiD model given by equation (2) we estimated separate specifications and utilized attendance data for different time periods, for students treated in the summer of 2021 and students treated during the 2021-22 school year.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, for students treated during the summer of 2021, we used attendance data that spanned the

months of January 2021 (6 months prior to treatment) through June of 2021 (10 months after treatment). Similarly, for students treated during the 2021-22 school year we used attendance data that spanned the months of September 2021 through June 2022.

## Qualitative Methods

### Sample

The lead researcher on the evaluation was invited by the CSDE to attend one of their monthly meetings on Zoom with representatives from the 15 LEAP districts. At the meeting, the CSDE LEAP representative, Kari Sullivan, introduced the lead researcher and asked district leaders to cooperate with requests for participation in the evaluation coming from the research team. It was noted that the independent research team intended to conduct in-depth interviews and focus groups with all 15 district leaders as well as various constituents from three focal districts. All districts were invited to volunteer to be one of the three focal districts who would participate in a more in-depth analysis.

One district volunteered to be a focal district and the research team then worked in conjunction with the CSDE to identify two other districts who would be good potential candidates as focal districts and to extend follow-up invitations to them to participate. The three focal districts were selected based on the following criteria: (a) they represented examples of different models of implementation of LEAP, (b) they had been relatively successful models for implementing LEAP according to the CSDE, and (c) they agreed to participate in this evaluation.

Ultimately, the research team conducted interviews with 20 district leaders from all 15 districts participating in LEAP. These participants were most often superintendent, but some included Assistant Superintendents and/or Community Engagement Specialists from the district.

<sup>2</sup> A cohort corresponds to all students treated by the LEAP program in the same month. Note that the estimator developed by Sun and Abraham calculates weights to estimate the CATT to correct the potential for negative weights in DiD event study models with staggered timing of adoption.

<sup>3</sup> Note that when forming the control group (i.e. the students treated in later months) for each cohort, we only include observations prior to treatment. Thus, for students treated in October we only keep their September observations. Similarly, for students treated in November we keep their September and October observations and for students treated in December keep their September, October and November observations and so on until we get to students treated in June and keep their September – May observations.

<sup>4</sup> Note that 85% of all students were treated during the 2021 school year and hence only 15% of students were treated during the previous summer.

In addition, a total of 44 home visitors from the three focal districts participated in focus groups and a total of 44 families, who had received home visits in the three focal districts, were interviewed by the research team.

### **Instrumentation**

Within the qualitative framework, the interviewers served as the primary data collection instrument. However, each interview and focus group followed a semi-structured protocol of questions administered to all participants.

### **Procedures**

The following procedures received Institutional Review Board approval prior to their implementation and all participants provided informed consent to participate.

To recruit district leaders to participate in interviews, Kari Sullivan from the CSDE contacted leaders from all participating districts via email letting them know that the research team would be inviting them to participate in an interview about their experience with LEAP. The research team then contacted the district leaders via email to arrange interviews. Thirteen interviews were conducted individually via Microsoft Teams and took approximately 30 minutes. One interview was conducted via telephone due to technical difficulties and the research team members took written notes on the conversation. A final interview was conducted in person for convenience and notes of that meeting were also taken by the research team and included in our data analysis.

The district leaders were asked a standard set of six questions related to topics such as: why they participated in LEAP, financial costs of the program, how spending was prioritized, perceived buy-in to the program, benefits and challenges, and lessons learned/advice they would give to districts considering participating. All participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and any quotes provided in the results section have therefore been assigned

pseudonyms (e.g., DL1). Because the unit of analysis is the district leader perspectives, even when two different leaders were interviewed from the same district, their responses correspond to a single pseudonym representing that district (e.g., DL15). Thus, there are a total of 15 pseudonyms (DL1 to DL15), with the DL number being randomly assigned to each district.

Conducting home visits with families of students who are chronically absent requires a high degree of trust between home visitors and the families. Consequently, participants were recruited via a snowball sampling method. Specifically, the CSDE put the research team in touch with LEAP coordinators from the three focal districts via email. The research team then contacted the LEAP coordinators in each of the focal districts and asked them to participate in an introductory Zoom call to explain the purpose of the project and to ask for their assistance in recruiting home visitors to participate.

The research team then reached out via email to the home visitors identified by the site leaders to schedule focus groups via Microsoft Teams, which was used to record and transcribe the interviews. A total of nine focus groups interviews were conducted with a total of (N = 44) home visitors (i.e., approximately 15 participants from each of the three focal districts). Each focus group ran approximately 60 minutes. Participants were asked to provide written consent via Qualtrics in advance of the meeting and received a \$50 Amazon gift card for their participation. The focus group followed a semi-structured format, using the protocol as outlined in our IRB application. We asked the home visitors thirteen questions focused on topics such as: their general experience participating in LEAP, the approximate number of visits conducted, their professional role (teacher, counselor, family-engagement specialist, etc.), LEAP effectiveness, program support, coordination, challenges, and recommendations for the state.

After the focus groups, the research team followed-up with the home visitors who participated and asked them to recommend families they thought would be receptive to participating in interviews by the research team for the evaluation. The home visitor would then accompany the research team to the home visit, make introductions to the families, help to establish rapport, and then was invited to leave or remain while the research team conducted the interviews with the families. In most cases, the home visitor remained during the family interview as the parents / caregivers expressed that they preferred them to stay. The families interviewed both in person and online were asked to provide written or electronic consent via Qualtrics in advance of or at the time of the meeting. Each family received a \$50 Amazon gift card for their participation. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, using the protocol as outlined in the approved IRB application.

Participating families were asked a set of seven questions, focused on topics such as: their overall experience with LEAP, the number of times they met with their assigned LEAP home visitor, their perceptions of the effectiveness of LEAP for their child, and LEAP's impact on their child's attendance and engagement in school. If the child was home, we also asked them questions about their experience with having someone associated with the school visit their home, and the impact that this person had on their schooling success. Sixteen of the 44 interviews (36%) were conducted in Spanish. In these cases, the interviews were recorded, and the answers were transcribed in Spanish and English.

A total of (N = 44) interviews were conducted with parents and guardians of students who received the home visits, again approximately 15 from each of the three focal districts. Each interview ran approximately 30-45 minutes. Participants were selected based upon the recommendations from the LEAP home visitor<sup>5</sup>.

5 For ease of readability, we refer to districts' use of the terms "community-service home visitors," "family engagement specialists," or simply "home visitors" in this section as "home visitors." We use this term ("home visitor") to describe any individuals, district employees or staff hired by community-agencies that were contracted / paid by the schools / districts to engage families and conduct home visits for LEAP.

### Analysis Strategy

All interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed. When interviews and focus groups were conducted using Microsoft Teams software, the data were automatically transcribed by the program and the transcripts were then cleaned and prepared for qualitative analysis by a team of research assistants. For the in-person interviews, the data were recorded on electronic devices and those were sent to a transcription service called Rev for automated transcription. The research assistants then reviewed the automatically generated transcripts and cleaned up any wording errors by going back to the original recordings to verify.

Once the transcripts were cleaned and prepared for analysis, they were imported into the MAXQDA (2022) software. Deductive and inductive coding processes were used to extract themes relevant to the research questions. To measure the reliability of our qualitative interpretation, we first developed a coding bank based upon our interview questions. Then, each member of our qualitative research team independently coded a transcript to determine the extent to which our coding bank adequately represented the themes presented in the data. Each member of our team was instructed to write down any additional codes /

themes not included in the coding bank but that appeared in the transcript. Our research team then met together to propose suggestions and reach consensus on finalizing the coding bank.

Once we reached agreement on the themes to be included in the coding bank, we then completed a two-stage norming process to strengthen the internal-consistency, or percent agreement, of our ratings. Working in pairs, our qualitative research team was assigned a transcript to code independently and then meet together to reach agreement on the codes. These parts would repeat this process until they reached an agreement of at least 75%, which we considered acceptable. We employed this validity procedure to help us to find agreement among multiple sources of information to form themes or categories and therefore reduce bias in our interpretation of the results (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Interviews times were arranged via email and all participants gave consent to have their answers included in the study. Thirteen out of fifteen interviews were conducted by video online using Microsoft Teams. The Teams software has the advantage of being able to auto-transcribe conversations. For one interview, the Teams software did not work, so the interview was conducted by phone. For another participant, the in-

terview was conducted in person. In the case of in-person and phone interviews, project team members took detailed notes of the conversations while conducting the interviews.

Each interview followed a semi-structured protocol in which the same set of six questions were asked of all participants; the investigators probed with follow-up questions where relevant. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes.

After the interviews were complete and a transcript was generated, the research assistants engaged in cleaning the transcripts following typical procedures used in qualitative analyses (e.g., removal of filler words, redundancies, etc.).

Once the interview transcripts were cleaned, they were imported into MaxQDA 2022 and content analyzed for common themes. Written notes were uploaded for the two participants who were not interviewed via Microsoft Teams.

The transcript data were analyzed using a mixture of deductive coding (based on the questions asked) and emergent analytic coding typically used in content analysis (Stemler, 2001). The results were then grouped into thematic categories that were then organized in terms of their relevance to the project's research questions. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 0 below.

**Table 0**

Qualitative interviews conducted for the three focal school districts participating in LEAP, 2021-2022

	District 1	District 2	District 3
District leaders interviewed	1	2	2
Home visitors interviewed	14	17	13
Families interviewed (in-home interviews) [Zoom or phone call]	15 (10) [5]	16 (12) [4]	13 (3) [10]

## RESULTS

Before addressing the primary research questions, participants provided us with important contextual information related to their reasons for participation in LEAP and challenges associated with chronic absenteeism in the context of Covid-19. Thus, before presenting the results of our main research questions, we first provide contextual information relevant to the present evaluation.

### Why Did Districts Decide to Participate in LEAP?

Participating districts were all asked the reason(s) for participating in LEAP. For many participants, the most attractive part of LEAP was the fit of the project with their priorities and strategic plans. For example, three district leaders noted the following,

*Obviously, this [LEAP] meshes well with our priorities. We knew post COVID, addressing school insecurities, school fears at that time, reengagement fears were something that we wanted to actively do. And as such, attendance has been a long-standing challenge for us prior to COVID and we knew post COVID, that was a tough year too because many of the kids were out as remote learners for that whole year. So not only did [we have] kids who typically are disengaged from school, but - you have actually solidified that, calcified that habit in them. So, we knew there would be a lot of work to do. So, this was a really positive thing for us. -DL7*

*Well, because there was such a need to re-engage students and families. Prior to the pandemic, we had struggled with a certain percentage of kids, particularly at the high school level, who were disengaging for a variety of reasons. And then when COVID hit, it just really escalated. So, we just viewed this as an opportunity to intensify and expand the efforts that were already in place. -DL6*

*We were already doing extensive home visits and we're more than willing, to be honest, to take the small amount. Well, actually was a lot more money than we needed to potentially supplement home visits that were after hours. And we like the model. I guess we've embraced it as*

*a district whether we take the money or not. We've basically said in our district, LEAP is here to stay. This is how we do home visits. This is how we track them. This is our model. We don't care if the governor gives us money or not. Nothing's going to change. So, I think if you ask me questions about the model and how we engage parents, we would give you a very positive review. - DL9*

For others, the answer was  tied to the particular moment of need  as well as the influx of additional resources to deal with that need as exemplified by the following quotes,

*Post-pandemic we were experiencing a lot of difficulty with reengaging kids and having them come to school, so we saw it as an opportunity. We're also a district that is resource-challenged, so it was also an ability to get additional resources for our children through a grant that could help remedy some of the things. - DL14*

*Attendance was definitely a priority that we have been struggling with. Prior to this opportunity, we have put forth a lot of effort to chronic absenteeism and combating chronic absenteeism. But to be able to receive resources that are dedicated to that was very helpful and something that we really desperately needed. -DL2*

*It was almost like a no-brainer; we have the numbers, we have the data that says our students are disengaged, our families are not engaged, so now it's like, "Hey, we're providing you with the resources to engage," but why wouldn't you? -DL5*

Still, other district leaders were enticed by the opportunity to collaborate with the state and other districts to address the unprecedented situation:

*Our chronic absences, like everyone else's, was very, very bad immediately following the pandemic. And so just the opportunity to sort of partner with other districts and the State. I think the more you look at attendance issues there, it's just that they're so layered. Like it's a layered problem. I think the opportunity to sort of think through a really complex challenge with other*

*people was appealing. - DL11*

And for a few districts, they engaged in LEAP because they felt that they did not have much choice.

*I asked our point person here at Central Office why we were doing it...When somebody from the State Department is saying you really should do something, I think people kind of take that seriously and agree to do so. - DL3*

In sum, districts tended to participate in LEAP for four main reasons:

- The project fit with their priorities and strategic plans,
- The influx of resources fit the needs of the post-pandemic moment,
- They were eager to collaborate with the State and other districts on this topic, and/or
- They felt that they did not have much choice about whether or not to participate.

### Reasons for Chronic Absenteeism are Often Complex, Especially During Covid-19

During the interviews with the district leaders and home visitors, participants shared a variety of stories and information about families' experiences prior to LEAP. Many of these stories detailed the reasons why students were chronically absent, ranging from health-related issues or lack of motivation to disconnectedness from school as well as broader contextual factors.

#### **Issue #1: Illness, Quarantining, Mental Health**

Home visitors shared that through their experiences visiting families, they learned that there were concerns with illness, quarantining, and mental health. In six of the nine group interviews (66%), home visitors mentioned the topic of illness as a concern and reason why students were not attending school. In nearly half of the group interviews, home visitors mentioned that students' absenteeism increased because of COVID related issues such as quarantining. In one-third of the interviews, mental health was also described as a chal-



lenge prior to LEAP. Specific concerns discussed included: anxiety, abuse, and other forms of trauma. One home visitor stated: “We’re learning about traumatic events that are stopping these kids from going to school: “I have anxiety, I’ve been bullied...” It’s [given me] a different perspective on chronic absenteeism.”

Because of LEAP, home visitors and school personnel were able to gain more of an understanding of the challenges that students were facing and build empathy towards the situations that kept them from attending school. Some parents described their children wanting to go to school but could not because of illness or because of the school’s health protocols. One parent described their son’s experience like this, “He had missed a bunch because of virtual and he missed a lot last year because every time they sent him home from the nurse’s office. I had to keep him home for 48 hours.”

For other parents, chronic illness was the core issue. Some parents were not able to receive adequate care due to the impact that COVID had on the entire healthcare system. One mother described, “[My son] has a sleeping disorder and he has seasonal allergies all year and they get very severe. He gets headaches like nose fevers when that’s happening and then when he’s not able to sleep. He’s up. He could stay up for three days straight and more if the medicine isn’t working...”

Among the families interviewed with students in middle school or high school, often, the reasons for why students were chronically absent were complex. Regarding mental health and other related challenges, one parent described her daughter’s absences as follows:

*Last year, we had a lot of deaths in the family. We had a lot of people that we knew pass away. Not only people my age, but older, younger and my kids’ grade, and a person that they’ve known for a really long time.*

In several cases, it was the LEAP home visitor who helped the child handle the loss and re-engage them with school. Another parent describes,

*[Home visitors] were really attentive with my daughter. Her father passed away and so she was really sad and down. She didn’t want to go to school. But [the home visitor] would talk to her and show her how school can make her feel better. They were communicative with me, so that I made sure she didn’t miss school.*

Conversely, other parents described their teens as refusing to go to school. One parent described her daughter’s actions before LEAP as follows: “She wouldn’t go to school or she would try to stay home from school, purposely missing the bus by staying in the bathroom, nervous...” These descriptions illustrate the complexity that many households had to navigate during COVID until the home visitor became involved. Other reasons for teen absenteeism prior to LEAP that were discussed include teen pregnancy, depression, and a general dislike towards school. According to one mother, “Honestly, they didn’t like school. Before the LEAP program, it was just “Mom I don’t want to go to school”, “Mom I hate school”; “I don’t want to do this mom”; “I don’t want to go.”

These findings were supported by the home visitors. Within six of the nine group interviews (66%), home visitors mentioned the lack of motivation of students and in five (55%) of the interviews they mentioned how students did not want to attend school. Home visitors described witnessing cases of “school avoidance,” “students feeling like they were giving up,” and students who “lacked a connection with the school or teachers.” One home visitor explained:

*[The student’s] response to us when we asked why he wasn’t coming to school was, “Well, you know, it’s the end of the marking period. And you know, I don’t even know where I’m gonna be, so why bother? I’m just gonna start again next year.”*

### **Issue #2: Many Remote Learners Wanted to Stay Home**

For some, there appeared to be a significant disconnect between a school’s intent for students to attend and the students perceived reason for doing so. Simply put, why attend school if there is no pur-

pose to it? Some home visitors suspected that social distancing and remote schooling had an impact on students’ lack of motivation. For example: “[The student] was so used to being home for those two years that he just didn’t want to leave.”

Throughout LEAP, home visitors were able to gather more information to better understand students’ and families’ connection, or lack thereof, with school in order to provide the necessary resources.

It is clear, however, that there are a wide variety of reasons that students may be chronically absent, and there is no single profile of a student with chronic absenteeism. Although it is common to adopt a deficit narrative and blame the students as being “lazy” or “unmotivated,” to truly understand the problem, it is essential to consider the wide range of factors influencing chronic absenteeism, as one district leader noted,

*I think the second piece is getting past the deficit narrative. “Nobody wants to go to school. Nobody cares whether kids go to school.” That’s not true. Go talk to a struggling mom. She does care. She doesn’t know what to do. And neither do you because you’re asking her. So, I think a little bit of humility around this thing [is important]. Obviously on the intervention side, mental health supports a lot of these things which boil down to high levels of anxiety, high levels of depression, and we have to deal with that. That’s not one where we can say, “Go win one for the Gipper and go to school tomorrow,” like, that’s not happening. But no excuses. Let’s work on this together. I think that’s the kind of approach that I found in my long time working here that our families respond to. They don’t want to be told what they can’t do. They don’t want to be told that they’re broken, they don’t wanna be stroked on the back and excused. They want their kids to be successful, just like you and I do. And when we treat them like that, they respond. -DL7*

The following three factors noted relate to common contextual influences on chronic absenteeism noted by participants:

### **Issue #3: Mixed Messaging to the Students**

Although the issue of chronic absenteeism is present to some degree in nearly all school districts, this problem became exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic with the move to emergency remote learning. One reason for this may have been the mixed messages that students were receiving with regard to attendance, as one district leader noted:

*Our Chief Performance Officer was here last week. We pulled all the kids from one school who are just before/just after the CA number. And you had kids that were never on the list for about five days in a row for, like, a respiratory illness. Like lots of them. So, it's a little dicey, you know. We told you to come to school. Then we said, "Well, wait, if you have a sniffle, stay home. It might be COVID," now it's like "Well, listen, we need you to come to school even if you have a sniffle. But take your temperature, have a test, blah, blah." It's a crazy challenge. And so, it requires thoughtful, skilled people as part of a collaborative team. And if [student] is reading below grade level, that's added to the conversation. If she's not, then we want you in school, but now you seem to be reading fine, so it's just complicated. -DL11*

In addition, the unpredictability of the pandemic made generating attendance policies a moving target.

*We had a real sound and thoughtful attendance plan ready to go at the beginning of last year. And then like September 10th, there was a COVID spike. So, we're not even sure, to be just totally transparent, it's almost impossible to say whether what we were doing or not worked last year because the number didn't get any better. It might have been worse if we weren't doing this maybe. Last year like no one was expecting a COVID spike in September, then another one in December...But we at least feel like we have a shot this year. So, I would say really, I know we used the money last year, but this year actually is the first year where you might be able to say, OK, get the chronic absence from 35% to 25%, we didn't hit our target, but we got 25% and that is actually the re-*

*sults of our work. So, this is really year one. When you think about measuring outcomes sort of independently with COVID removed. -DL11*

Nevertheless, some district leaders specifically commented on how attendance habits changed when learning was done remotely with students at home. For example, it was much easier for students to disengage by simply turning off their screens, and some of those bad habits carried over when they returned to in-person learning:

*We were one of the only districts that were still doing hybrid (learning) that second year and we didn't have our kids return until November and then we did hybrid that entire year, where we had other neighboring districts do hybrid and then the fall in-person. And we found a lot of those attendance behaviors or patterns from families where we were, like, telling kids to stay out of school because we were so worried about COVID and you know, all those precautionary things. We were quarantining classes, you know, left and right. And for appropriate reasons. But we found a lot of those bad behaviors kind of carried over even after the challenges of the pandemic somewhat subsided. -DL14*

Further complicating matters was the fact that some younger students had their first experiences with schooling during the pandemic when remote-learning was the policy, and parents may have been especially protective of sending young children in who were not yet eligible to be vaccinated and may have had respiratory conditions making them more susceptible to COVID:

*When we're saying, "OK, well [student] is in 3rd grade and she's like never really come to school consistently." And her mom is like, really protective. And she says, "She has asthma" but there's no medical note, well that's the nurse making a call to mom and not in like a punitive way, but saying "If [student] has serious asthma and we wanna be able to take care of her at school, so you can send her."...I mean a lot of it's a complex problem. -DL11*

### **Issue #4: Transportation**

Another issue that is partially related to the pandemic was a nationwide shortage of bus drivers, which had a surprising link to student absenteeism. Indeed, the issue with transportation for students added an extra layer of complications that has made it difficult for some students to consistently attend school. As one district leader noted,

*Ninety percent of students in this district ride the bus. That means that they depend on the bus being on time. There is a major bus driver shortage, so students miss the bus and sometimes don't get to school because the bus is 45-min to an hour late. If it doesn't show up on time, they just go back home that day. Transportation has been a major obstacle and contributor to attendance issues. Students cannot physically walk to school if they wanted because most live at least 4-5 miles away and some further than that. - DL8*

### **Issue #5: Family Circumstances**

More generally, however, even in non-pandemic times, there are a variety of complicated contextual factors that can interfere with students' ability to attend school regularly. Indeed, given the severity of these issues, school attendance may not be the family's top priority. Parents may work long hours and not be able to engage with the school. For example, families may be in unstable housing situation, as noted by one district leader:

*Families are living and subletting rooms in an apartment to live with family. You know you can have family of five or six living in a room with a whole bunch of other families. Uh, and that's not that. That's very unstable because it could be evicted at any point. And we have families living in cars as well -DL13*

There are also other several other factors that can interfere with parents' ability to support their children and engage with schools in regard to chronic absenteeism. For example, as noted by a home visitor below, there are various hurdles that make it difficult for parents to participate and be engaged in their children's education:

*We have kids whose families are having economic insecurity. They have a hard time. Parents have a hard time engaging with school because of long work hours. The fact that they're not familiar with the language, the fact that they're not familiar with the technology, the fact that they're not available at the same time, they're only available on weekends and at night. -DL13*

In addition, some parents who have had bad experiences in school might not see the value in sending their child to school:

*It's not just talking about going to the houses or going to get or incentivizing kids to get to school. It's multi-generational. So, we have a lot of kids, of course, the guardian figures are their parents or their grandparents or anything in between. And I think, you know, looking at what the data says or what research says about multi-generational connectedness...because I know the trauma they had with school. -DL15*

Among the families that were interviewed with elementary-aged children, several described reasons for chronic absenteeism that demonstrated that the whole family unit was disrupted either by the parents' illness, the child's repeated illness, or other factors, such as lack of computer literacy. One mother stated, "[The home visitor] was the only one that was helping my daughter because my daughter had depression because I was sick... it was very bad." Another mother described her son's challenges with computer literacy:

*Things got complicated when they had to do virtual learning... It was a struggle, you know, logging onto the computer and it was just too much. It was way too much, so even doing that, he wasn't interested... He wanted to physically be in school, but I have a lot of health issues, so I kind of kept on explaining to him "Listen, you go to school. I'm at risk."*

In sum, students are chronically absent for a wide variety of reasons. Although the dominant narrative generally conceives of absenteeism as a student issue, the reality is that contextual circumstances often influence student behaviors in profound ways that are important

to understand. These circumstances became even more convoluted during the pandemic as school districts attempted to create policy guidance for attendance while dealing with an unprecedented and ever-changing pandemic situation. Often, however, this resulted in mixed messages regarding the importance of in-person attendance.

In addition, part of the fallout of the global pandemic has been large-scale staffing shortages in nearly every industry, but particularly in public education. A practical example of that has been the staffing shortage related to school bus drivers, which has led to a situation where drivers are sometimes up to one-hour late to pick up students, causing students to miss school more frequently than they normally would.

## **Research Question #1: Who Received the Home Visits?**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for students treated by LEAP (Columns 1 and 2) and for all other students attending one of the 15 school districts that participated in LEAP (Columns 3 and 4). The first two rows of Table 1 present the mean and standard deviation of monthly attendance during the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years. Not surprisingly given the objective of LEAP, in 2020-21, students that would eventually be treated by LEAP had attendance rates that were approximately 20 percentage points lower (0.687 vs. 0.895) than other students. During the 2021-22 school year (when most students were treated by LEAP), the gap in attendance rates fell by roughly 5 percentage points, with attendance rates averaging approximately 73 percentage points for LEAP treated students and 88.5 percentage points for all other students in LEAP participating districts. Thus, while attendance increased on average between 2020-21 and 2021-22 among students treated by LEAP, attendance rates among LEAP treated students in 2021-22 still lagged behind the attendance rate of other students in the same districts.

The remaining rows of Table 1 pro-

vide means and standard deviations for student characteristics and prior performance on standardized exams. On average, students treated by LEAP are significantly more likely to be Black, eligible for free or reduced-price meals, receive special education services, and be an English language learner. Similarly, students treated by LEAP tended to perform substantially worse on the standardized SBA or SAT exam prior to treatment than other students attending the same districts. The 5th column of Table 1 presents the t-statistics associated with the null hypothesis that the mean value of any given variable is the same for students treated by LEAP and those not treated. Given that all the t-values in column 5 are substantially larger than 2, the results reported there suggest that students treated by LEAP have different mean values of all the characteristics reported in Table 2 than students attending the same districts but not treated by LEAP.

Furthermore, information on the characteristics of LEAP districts and students treated by the LEAP program is provided in Tables 1A and 1B (see Appendix A). Specifically, Table 1A provides information on the share of high need students in each district, prior student achievement on the SBA or SAT, average attendance rates during the 2021-22 school year and the share of students in each district that received a LEAP visit. Similarly, Table 1B contains the same information as Table 1 along with the unduplicated number of students treated separately for each of the 15 LEAP participating districts.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

There were four main approaches used in determining who received the site visits. The first was to focus on the district as a whole. The second was to target a particular level of schooling – typically either elementary or high school, but sometimes middle school. The third approach was to select a subset of schools within the district and to focus only on them with the resources provided by the LEAP. Lastly, the fourth approach was to select a particular demographic population to focus on. Even within these four broad categories, however, there was

**Table 1: Summary Statistics: Mean (St. Dev)**

	<b>Treated</b>	<b>St.Dev</b>	<b>Not Treated but in Treated District</b>	<b>St.Dev</b>	<b>T-test (1) - (3)</b>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Attendance Ratio 2020-21	0.687	(0.228)	0.895	(0.143)	88.926
Attendance Ratio 2021-22	0.729	(0.225)	0.885	(0.136)	71.901
Female	0.460	(0.498)	0.486	(0.500)	3.218
Black	0.460	(0.498)	0.486	(0.500)	3.218
Hispanic	0.460	(0.498)	0.486	(0.500)	3.218
White	0.085	(0.279)	0.174	(0.379)	15.073
Asian	0.023	(0.148)	0.036	(0.187)	4.715
Other	0.025	(0.157)	0.039	(0.194)	4.658
Special Education	0.238	(0.426)	0.178	(0.383)	-9.9441
Free or Reduced Price Lunch Eligible	0.852	(0.355)	0.670	(0.470)	-24.9386
English Learner	0.227	(0.419)	0.195	(0.396)	-5.1948
Prior Academic Performance (SBA_ELA)	2394.247	(96.975)	2443.928	(109.880)	16.246
Prior Academic Performance (SBA_MATH)	2372.505	(92.550)	2427.480	(101.238)	18.537
Prior Academic Performance (SAT_ELA)	405.714	(70.543)	458.125	(96.189)	6.719
Prior Academic Performance (SAT_MATH)	389.805	(70.242)	437.099	(94.727)	6.156
Grade During Treatment (e.g. 8, 9, 10)	6.725	(3.450)	6.407	(3.364)	-5.9424

*Notes:* Treated sample in columns 1 and 2 consists of all students that had a LEAP visit between the summer of 2021 and June of 2022. 85% of all treated students were treated during the 2021-22 school year while the remaining 15% were treated in the summer of 2021. Summary statistics in columns 3 and 4 are for all students other than students treated by the LEAP program in the same districts as the LEAP treated students. Column 5 reports t-statistics for the null hypothesis that the mean values for treated and non-treated students are the same.

**Table 2: Personnel Conducting Home Visitations: Mean**

	First Visit				Follow Up Visits			
	Teacher	Other District Employee	Non-District Employee	Other	Teacher	Other District Employee	Non-District Employee	Other
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Overall	0.25	0.54	0.20	0.01	0.24	0.60	0.16	0.00
By District								
Waterbury	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.33	0.09	0.91	0.00	0.00
New Haven	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00
New Britain	0.30	0.70	0.00	0.00	0.35	0.65	0.00	0.00
New London	0.03	0.62	0.35	0.00	0.02	0.76	0.22	0.00
Bridgeport	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	.	.	.	.
Hartford	0.06	0.42	0.52	0.00	0.05	0.52	0.44	0.00
East Hartford	0.12	0.88	0.00	0.00	0.46	0.54	0.00	0.00
Windham	.	.	.	.	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
Danbury	0.46	0.54	0.01	0.00	0.43	0.56	0.01	0.00
Norwich	0.33	0.52	0.08	0.08	0.26	0.63	0.08	0.03
Torrington	0.33	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.29	0.71	0.00	0.00
CREC	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.98	0.02	0.00
Meriden	0.73	0.14	0.14	0.00	0.50	0.42	0.08	0.00
Stamford	0.10	0.12	0.78	0.00	0.07	0.10	0.82	0.00
Manchester	0.00	0.98	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.98	0.02	0.00

Notes: Table presents the share of LEAP visits conducted by type of personnel, both overall and by individual LEAP district. Columns 1 - 4 present shares for the first LEAP visit while columns 5 - 8 provide shares for any follow-up visits. Windham did not report the role (teacher, other district employee, etc.) of the person conducting the first home visitation while Bridgeport did not report the role of the person conducting any follow-up visitations.

some variation between districts.

### **Approach #1: District-Wide**

**Intervention.** Districts that took a whole district approach generally focused on anyone chronically absent at any level, as noted by the following district leaders:

*It is not targeted home visiting. It's a prevention model to encourage schools and teachers to connect with families. And the way they chose the families is randomly. They don't target the kids who are not attending school. They simply do it with anyone and everyone that they can. -DL13*

*There was no prioritization of spending by school. Basically, the idea was that each school has one [Engagement Specialist] and there are X of them at the district level. For each school, the idea was to make a list of students with the most absences to the least absences and go from the most to the least to try to engage them. We prioritized students by severity of absences in each school -DL8*

*I would say DISTRICT is pretty much a very economically oppressed community of people who have been historically marginalized. So, we try to spread things out as much as we can...I mean, the need is everywhere. So, like, hey, your school has 16% chronically absent mine's 22%, like, I'm not even sure we could articulate what the difference in that percentage is. So, there's a huge need here. -DL9*

One district leader noted that while there are typically more staff at elementary schools, more students are served by high schools. This led to an interesting question as to how best to evenly distribute the funding across the district. The ultimate resolution for this district was found by working with a community partner, which led to a different kind of district-wide approach:

*I think once we included the community partners, the funding became relatively equal. Just because, with the [greater number of] elementary schools, you're clearly gonna have more staff there. Even though there's more students at the secondary level, there's less school, so to speak, right? But once we shifted to*

*the Community Partners, instead of me funding teams of three [at each school], I basically said "I'm gonna fund you to create a pool of people." So, the [Community Partner] went out and hired additional staff or reallocated what that looked like. So now they had a team of 10 that I met with and they were going out and knocking on doors. So, we have family school liaisons here, who we pay, district staff, that go out to help families with learning, reaching out if there's attendance issues, etc. Well, we're very limited in that number [at the district]. So being able to pay the [Community Partners] to have 15 people that I'm sending out and if I know that these students are part of that pool of kids not going to school or are going late, then we're building a community, a communication log with the school. -DL4*

### **Approach #2: Targeting a Subset of Schools.**

One district chose to focus on a particular subset of schools with the highest levels of chronic absenteeism. They also wanted to ensure that schools at every education level were represented:

*They said we couldn't do all XX schools, so we had to kind of really hone in on those that could really benefit from this intervention immediately and then branch out from there. So, we wanted to have every education level. So, we did high school, middle and elementary, but looking at the numbers from those areas, who was in desperate need of this program? That's how we were able to start the pilot of the seven schools. And then as we continued to move along, the person that I worked with before the Superintendent retired, her predecessor came in and said, "Hey, I would like to add one of our programs." So, they became 8 schools...Now we're at 9. -DL1*

Other districts focused on only one educational level, such as elementary school. One district leader noted that elementary schools were an easier target in some ways because parents tend to be more involved. The target was the parents and having conversations with them about the importance of schooling. At the middle and high school level, the focus of the intervention shifted to be about

the individual student and their reasons for not coming to school and trying to incentivize them.

*I think it's a little different when you're focusing on the elementary. A lot of that money and efforts are geared towards educating families because they're the ones that are responsible for getting those children to school. We take a little bit of a different approach at the high school level that involves a little bit more of trying to engage the students themselves in coming to school and what are the root causes of them not coming to school? I think there's some different barriers when you get to the middle/high school level than at the elementary level. But our focus really has tried to be more at the elementary level, cause we know that's where it all begins. -DL2*

*It was definitely prioritized toward the earlier grades, elementary and middle. -DL3*

*We started with elementary and we've added some engaging people through other funding sources. Ironically, our biggest problem is really 7-12. But we felt like it was important to start elementary because, I mean, there's a problem there too. And we're trying to create this culture where kids come to school. We started at elementary schools. We believe it's a family challenge. So... we prioritized the elementary level and those students who are just under and just over chronically absent. -DL11*

Finally, some focused exclusively on high schools:

*So, in the fall of 2020, by late October, right around this time of year, we figured out a way to bring all of our K-5 kids back in-person full-time. We still had a significant percentage of families who didn't want any part of that. They were having their kids attend remotely, but we were able to offer all elementary students K-5 a full time in-person experience. We could not make that work [in the 6-12 grades]. So, our 6-12 kids were hybrid, so they were 2 1/2 days a week remote and 2 1/2 days in person until the end of March of 2021. So that really lent itself to more kids continuing to be disengaged. So secondary was really*

our focus just because of that structure and it needed to be, but not to say that the children and families at the elementary level, if there was a need, we have attendance teams at every school and those are very, very closely watched and families would be identified through that process. -DL6

These funds were primarily focused on our middle and high school Community Schools. -DL12

**Approach #3: Targeting Students at Transition Points.** Several districts chose to focus their LEAP interventions on specific transition points in student careers. Specifically, these tended to take place during the summer before entry into kindergarten, middle school, and high school as noted by the following district leaders:

*We specifically targeted our transition point. So, like from pre-K to kindergarten, 5th to 6th, 8th to high school, because that's where we tend to have a disconnect with our families when there's a lot of need, during the summer vacation. Our goal this summer was to try to hit all of our fifth graders going into 6th grade and all of our 8th graders going into ninth grade. – DL9*

*We did target incoming kindergarteners. And we did target the incoming kids for middle school, which would be the 6th graders and for high school which would be the 9th. And through that effort, one of the things that we also found that the two years that we were, you know, going through COVID that there was also a disconnect with families with children who didn't know how to register their children into school. -DL13*

*So, at first, we kind of tried to do the evenly spread mantra. We had all of our staff working on it. We kind of took the two book end approaches and I'll explain what I mean by that. We heavily resourced interventions at the K-2 level because we noticed with our first and 2nd graders that were kind of entering school during the pandemic, that we had higher absenteeism rates out of those populations than we've ever had...And then on the other side, we noticed with a lot of our secondary students, we had a lot of the same disengaged behaviors.*

*And so, we took the opportunity to work with the families, but also particularly the high school and how can we do summer school credit recovery? -DL14*

*We wanted to really focus on those transition years, especially our pre-K into our K, right, because we noticed that our preschool attendance, our students are about 52% chronically absent at the preschool age. There's a lot of factors that we don't have to get into now about that, but...we got a lot of feedback from our kindergarten teachers that they found that to be really great for relationship building. It cut down a lot of the parents' anxiety about starting kindergarten. And then with our fifth graders, we have two magnet schools plus middle school is new for everybody. And they get really nervous about the lockers and they get nervous about the schedule, so that could relieve some of that anxiety. -DL5*

**Approach #4: Targeting a Specific Demographic of Students.** Some districts focused on particular communities, such as immigrant populations.

*So, we had, for example, kids who weren't going weren't even registered in school, and when they did that that that basically kind of forced us to look at the different ages and grades those kids are in, so that, that, that would kind of, you know, kind of change a little bit our priority. And then mainly I would say it is our immigrant community that was also the disenfranchised. We saw that many kids that were arriving. Unaccompanied youth basically who were arriving with no educational background and with parents who are too busy to work and don't understand the system. Uh, we had a really hard time getting them to come to school, so they would register, but they it, you know, getting them to school... So that was another priority is the immigrant newcomer families. -DL13*

### Summary

In sum, amongst the 15 participating districts, there were four main strategies used in determining who received home visits:

1. Taking a district-wide approach,

targeting all students chronically absent in the district.

2. Targeting a specific subset of schools in the district that had high levels of chronic absenteeism.
3. Targeting students in particular grade levels, often at critical transition points in the summer; before attending elementary school, middle school, or high school.
4. Targeting a specific demographic of students such as immigrants who have demonstrated a need for extra support related to attendance.

## Research Question #2: Who Conducted the Home Visits?

The second research question asked, “Who conducted the home visitations: district employees (e.g., teachers, administrators) or contracted entities (e.g., community-based organizations)?”

Table 2 presents a summary of the quantitative information on the personnel conducting the LEAP home visits provided by the districts, both overall and by individual school district. Columns 1-4 present the share of first LEAP home visits conducted by each category of personnel while columns 5-8 present the same information for any follow-up visits. Overall, 25% of first LEAP home visits were conducted by a teacher, 54% of first LEAP home visits were conducted by a district employee other than a teacher, and 20% were conducted by a person or organization outside of the district. As shown in columns 5-8, follow-up home visits followed a very similar pattern. However, as shown in the remainder of Table 2 there is substantial variation in these percentages across LEAP participating districts. For example, New Haven Public Schools contracted out the initial LEAP visits to a grass roots community organization who then conducted canvassing of neighborhoods where data showed high level of chronic absenteeism, rather than visiting individual student homes. Similarly, Waterbury mainly relied on district employees other than teachers to conduct the initial home visits (67%) while Stanford relied primarily on non-district employees to conduct

initial home visits (78%). Finally, only one district, Meriden, relied primarily on teachers to conduct initial home visits.

Table 3 (following page) presents information on the location of the first and any follow-up LEAP home visits, again both overall and by individual school district. Overall, 64% of all first LEAP home visits were conducted at a student's home while 33% were conducted by phone and the remainder by Zoom. In contrast, most follow-up home visits were conducted by phone (48%) while only 22% of follow-up home visits were conducted at a student's home. Once again, however, there is substantial vari-

ation in these percentages across LEAP participating districts. For example, four districts (Hartford, New London, Bridgeport, and Capital Region Education Council) conducted over 80% of their initial LEAP visits at the student's home while Manchester and Danbury conducted the majority of their initial LEAP visits via telephone. We coded New Haven as non-applicable since, as noted above, the school district contracted out initial LEAP home visits to an outside agency who conducted neighborhood canvassing rather than individual student visits.

In our conversations with district-level administrators, home visitors, and

families, it was clear that in most cases, home visitors were school staff and teachers who worked for the schools. In a few cases, districts contracted community-service providers to conduct the home visits, but this structure was not used by most districts. LEAP was unique in that it provided an opportunity for a level of stakeholder collaboration which is rare in our public school system. For example, one school's team of LEAP home visitors included a school assistant principal, teachers, counselors / social workers, paraprofessionals, and a school secretary.

Districts showed some variation in how

**Table 3: Type of LEAP Visit**

	First Visit					Follow Up Visits				
	Home	Phone	Zoom	School	Other	Home	Phone	Zoom	School	Other
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
<b>Overall</b>	0.48	0.33	0.08	0.00	0.11	0.22	0.48	0.06	0.04	0.20
<b>By District</b>										
Waterbury	0.64	0.08	0.09	0.00	0.19	0.08	0.65	0.07	0.01	0.20
New Haven	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Britain	0.47	0.45	0.02	0.00	0.06	0.29	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.04
New London	0.82	0.03	0.05	0.00	0.10	0.67	0.15	0.02	0.00	0.16
Bridgeport	0.94	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.26	0.70	0.01	0.00	0.03
Hartford	0.81	0.07	0.04	0.00	0.08	0.53	0.33	0.04	0.00	0.10
East Hartford	0.32	0.37	0.11	0.00	0.20	0.21	0.68	0.06	0.00	0.04
Windham	0.47	0.23	0.03	0.00	0.27	0.28	0.53	0.00	0.00	0.19
Danbury	0.08	0.64	0.06	0.00	0.21	0.06	0.63	0.04	0.00	0.27
Norwich	0.39	0.08	0.30	0.00	0.23	0.36	0.30	0.10	0.00	0.24
Torrington	0.61	0.15	0.17	0.00	0.06	0.46	0.23	0.13	0.00	0.17
CREC	0.86	0.00	0.08	0.00	0.06	0.25	0.01	0.64	0.00	0.10
Meriden	0.46	0.17	0.24	0.00	0.13	0.37	0.39	0.12	0.00	0.12
Stamford	0.53	0.12	0.14	0.00	0.20	0.23	0.33	0.02	0.15	0.27
Manchester	0.04	0.94	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.08	0.82	0.04	0.00	0.07

*Notes:* Table presents the share of LEAP visits by the location of the LEAP visit, both overall and by individual LEAP district. Columns 1 - 4 present shares for the first LEAP visit while columns 5 - 8 provide shares for any follow-up visits. New Haven Public Schools conducted canvassing of neighborhoods where data showed high level of chronic absence rather than individual LEAP visits and hence we code New Haven as N/A.



they conducted the home visit intervention. However, there were two main models. The first model involved using school personnel exclusively and the second model involved the use of community partners. Each model had strong advocates.

### **Model #1: School-Based Personnel as the Home Visitors**

Districts embracing the school-based personnel model did so for a variety of reasons. Perhaps the most popular reason articulated was based on principle. Many district leaders felt that it was important that the connection to the students be someone within the school:

*From a staffing level, I think having your own internal people, and if we can grab a teacher, someone with a relationship with the kid, is more effective. I think districts that went out and just used the money and hired 3 random new people and said just go on home visits...You know [this home visitor] has a relationship with the school. And so, when he goes, he can answer probably just about any question a parent might have and also knows how to redirect...* -DL9

*I've heard from other districts that's what they were doing and it was kind of the push, like get out there, get out there, hire the local pastor or hire the local basketball coach. And I pushed back and said, "No." because again, in family engagement, that's what you don't want to do when you truly are building relationships and that's the key to this connection and connection builds the relationship. You don't want to throw the random pastor to visit you in June and July. He's gonna hand you off to this other person, you're going into people's homes. You're really entering their lives. So, I was very adamant about, "No, that's not how I'm doing this, trust me, I have a plan. You guys just have to trust me." ...So, I was very intentional in the ways in which I hired [staff from our buildings], the ways in which I put people in buildings, and again LEAP just had to kind of trust me because I wasn't doing it their way.* -DL11

*This is in-house for us and across the district. For us, it took root in different*

*places as things always do based on the leadership at the school, but we support it as a district initiative. So, we wanted to go everywhere. At the time our middle school for one reason or another, really kind of became a leader for us.* -DL7

Another reason given for having the home visitors be school staff is because the district did not have established relationships with any community partners whom they felt were capable of doing the home visits:

*We don't have community partners that have a huge capacity to do things like this. I wish we did. [Our district] is a little unique. We're a little bit of a desert in terms of this. We also find that oftentimes when we work with a certain group of community partners, we have a lack of capacity and ultimately, we're just funding organizational bills. And so, I'd rather not spend my money.* -DL7

Many LEAP districts employed a designated engagement specialist in each school in their district.

*So, we had a person designated in each of those schools to help support the leadership team around engaging our students and engaging our families. So, in terms of the funding, prior to LEAP we were actually, as a district anyway, going to engage in the home visitation program. Actually, before meeting with the RESC, we had already, as a result of COVID, it had required us to think differently about our roles and responsibilities to kind of prevent so much layoff and trying to keep staff not only gainfully employed, but also might help us meet our needs. And so, one of the things we did was we had after school coordinators who would ordinarily lose their positions, they had established great connections with their families that our certified staff didn't have. So, we chose to capitalize on that and repurpose their roles into being attendance and family engagement coordinators and we were able to do that as a result of the ESSR funding.* -DL5

There was no instance where the home visitors were exclusively teachers, however. Within a school, the home-visitors always consisted of multi-disciplinary

teams within the school, often involving teachers, counselors, administrators, paraprofessionals, etc.

*Many teachers believed in the actual idea. They were willing to actually go above and beyond, and not only teachers also support staff. We had our social worker, counselors, even administrators, where we're willing to jump and be part of the world and go to the houses.* -DL15

*It's not that we wanted to exclude our teachers, but we were really mindful of not overlaying or not asking one more thing of our educators. And so, it became this multidisciplinary approach. And we also had specific roles, our student engagement specialists or family and community support providers [home visitors] ... And so, it was before LEAP. Right now, our model was a social worker and a family and community support provider. At times it was a student engagement specialist, a group of people, a teacher, and then our CEO, a representative from our CEO. This is especially in our neighborhood schools that have a Community School framework.* -DL12

*So, each cohort has an associate principal, the relevant school counselors, and [Engagement Specialist] sit on these "cohort teams" as he calls them, and that's basically what other schools would call a student assistance team.* -DL3

*In terms of staffing, we had much more difficulty at the elementary level with our staff. You know, we had offered for just about anybody who wanted to, especially our social worker and psychologist, and we didn't get near as many elementary home visits. I'm going to say not because parents didn't want us, but just because we didn't have the level of staffing at the elementary level willing to work in the summer.* -DL9

### **Model #2: Community Partners as Home Visitors**

Those who did use community partners also chose to do so for a variety of reasons, most of which were pragmatic. In some cases, district leaders did not want to ask teachers to do one more thing. In other cases, there were perceived bureaucratic limitations to what could

be done in terms of being able to pay/incentivize families, work during certain hours, etc. that could be overcome by partnering with community organizations. In addition, community partners provided a different point of entry for student who might be struggling with school.

Some district leaders noted that community partners were already set up to take care of certain issues, so it made sense to work together with them,

*I really think that engaging community partners in this work is critical because they have additional capacity to do some of this work. I think there's organizations out there that are set up specifically to do this kind of work. And just to be blunt, I don't think that teachers feel that home visits now need to be part of their responsibilities. -DL2*

*This work kind of brought to light the fact that schools can't do this alone. This is something that the Community needs to take an interest on, not only an interest, but they need to dedicate their time to helping us educator and raise our kids. Right, there are aspects of resources that are that are you know, provided by a community that is impacting our kids' ability to succeed in school and so things like right now, homelessness has gone up, right. So, one of the things that we're doing is using XXX money to kind of supplement and support this work in it. But looking at the kids who are homeless and families who were homeless. And so that is the network of agencies that we have [involved]. -DL13*

Another district leader noted that the decision to partner with community organizations largely came down to staffing,

*One of the biggest challenges really honestly with staffing and getting people who are willing also to go and people's homes and so on the backside of ARP over the American Rescue Plan dollars we built the cadre of what we call bilingual family liaisons, who we hired then who we implemented. Granted, in the beginning, we were just trying to grab anyone who was willing and certified. Staff are less willing to do things like this because [they] don't need the*

*money, you know? And what this grant throws at you in terms of dollars, if your motivation is to cash on that, it's probably not worth your time, whereas lower paid non-certified staff were getting to it. They're obviously less skilled typically, but we were really scrapping around to get people trained. -DL7*

An additional benefit of partnering with community organizations was that it gave districts greater flexibility in how to expend funds in ways that would not have been possible within the school district,

*This is actually something that our [community partners] are able to help us with. We are not able to give a family a gift card, for example, because of a variety of things. And so those incentives are key. And then these additional contracted services and supports with our community partners, we would not be able to support that. -DL12*

*The [Community Partner] was able to pull in pizza and have more involvement with the families. The families were coming when we were doing it through the school side, any dollar you're spending, we would have to submit and then ask for reimbursement whereas the [community partners], we are basically saying "Here's the amount of money that we think it's gonna cost for you to support these 150 students" and then basically they take the funding and then they make it happen. There's a lot less red tape and the return on that investment was pretty significant. But having that response relationship with local agencies also establishes to the families that it's not just a one-time thing and you're seeing the connectedness between school and local partner, which I think is a very big piece. We even had secondary folks becoming summer counselors in training, trying to really establish a longer continuum of potential support versus just checking-in during the school day... -DL4*

Community partners build a pipeline and long-term relationships as demonstrated by this home visitor's analysis:

*I think when we shifted to that community partner piece, like being able to have schools build partnerships with*

*local agencies I think is huge. Because... we were able to get them programming... So instead of just going home, being able to have programming where they were able to actually go off site to the [Community Partner] where they have the gym, they have a pool, they have tutoring. -DL4*

In addition, the sharing of information and resources between district and community partners can be particularly valuable. Some district leaders reported a seamless relationship with the community partners. Two different district leaders commented on important cases in which information sharing was crucially important for helping students,

*Any information that we have from LEAP on home visiting, we share with them and they give back to us. We ran into a situation where someone had to [file a DCF report] on a family because they felt like the student was being abused or neglected. And I'm like, "Hey, we need to set up a protocol for this. This could happen." So, we came up with a script for our staff and we shared that with whatever Youth Services. And we're like, "Do you guys have anything?" And they're like, "No." And they've been doing this way longer than LEAP has existed. So, I said, it's really good for us to have that collaboration with them because if we run into a problem, we can kind of make it better for them. And if they run into a problem, we can adapt what they're using for the LEAP... DL15*

*We had some things where the Community Partner forwarded a concern from a parent, from a kid, a student who didn't want to show the school but told the Community Partner. They told me, "I told the admin the admin met with the family." Next thing you know, they helped the student that was having suicidal thoughts, like those were things that. You know, even if that's one student, that means LEAP worked right there! -DL4*

Other district leaders reported distant relationships with the community partners where the community partners handled the intervention entirely without much communication with the school district. This kind of model was the least

successful model according to the quantitative data, and as a result of reflecting on the experience, that district is going to change to a school-based model of intervention moving forward.

### Summary

Districts tended to favor either one of two approaches to home visits. The first approach involved the exclusive use of school personnel. While teachers were an important focal point, there was no instance in which teachers alone conducted the home visitations. Rather, in-school approaches tended to use multi-disciplinary teams. The second approach taken was to partner with a community organization for the home visits. In some cases, these partnerships were made for pragmatic reasons, such as the increased availability of staff from community organizations and reductions in the number of restrictions on how the LEAP money could be used to incentivize students and parents. Both models held value for those who embraced them.

## Key Factors Determining Buy-in to the Home Visiting Model

Although not originally one of our research questions, we felt it was important to explore the degree of buy-in to the home visiting model. In addition, it was equally important to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that might lead participants in the LEAP intervention to burn-out.

Three main factors were identified as being important to enhancing buy-in to ensure LEAP's success. These factors were related to: (a) ensuring home visitors' safety, (b) providing districts with trust and flexibility, (c) supporting home visitors in gaining a deeper understanding of student circumstances, and (d) providing adequate compensation for participation.

### Buy-in Factor #1: Ensuring Home Visitors' Safety

One major factor that affected home visitors' buy-in to the project was perceived safety. This took place on two main dimensions. The first dimension related to the physical safety home-visitors felt going into certain neighborhoods within

their district. The second dimension, however, directly related to the fact that this project was taking place in the middle of a pandemic where masking and social distancing were the norm. As one district leader noted,

*Staff buy-in was a challenge for us. Here in DISTRICT, there are times where people feel it could be unsafe to be in certain neighborhoods, etc., where you really do need to target and work from that and they could be right. Certainly, this was also the time where people were very afraid of COVID. So, the notion of going to someone's home where you have very high COVID rates and occurrences, was not necessarily something people want to do. I really understand. -DL7*

Therefore, it was essential that LEAP required districts to send two staff members for every in-person home visit. Although this essentially doubled the number of staff required to conduct a visit, it was imperative to ensure the safety of the individuals. And in the 44 interviews we conducted with home visitors, and in our conversations with district-level administrators in all 15 participating school districts, there were no reports of injury or violence upon the home visitors.

### Buy-in Factor #2: Supporting Districts with Trust and Flexibility

Overall, the district leaders truly appreciated the flexibility that the state allowed them in terms of how to approach the project and use the funds.

*Before I actually made a decision, I wanted to know if this meant that we were gonna have to completely move away. I was like, keep the money. Not interested. We don't have the bandwidth to drop and pick up something else. So, when we learned that there was the flexibility to maintain the integrity of something we already had a baseline for, then we were in. -DL12*

*LEAP shouldn't be a cookie cutter initiative. Not every district functions the same. Not every district has the same community, or population... So, it makes it more difficult for us to implement any new initiatives or how to spend the money. It will be good if they under-*

*stand every district or at least send some representatives to at least talk to some of our leaders and they can see what the community is and how they can actually help us. -DL15*

A large number of teachers and staff across their district believed in the idea of home visitation and saw the importance of it, to the point where safety concerns were no longer the main barrier. Further, as another district leader noted, when you give teachers a charge and some flexibility in how to accomplish it, that creates a culture of trust and can really facilitate buy-in:

*Our middle school principals are the real leaders on this, and so he started devoting faculty meetings during the school year [to engagement] ...on the second one [Tuesday] what he did was, he said this is "Family Engagement Tuesday." So, you can either go with your colleagues, your teams. What we found is people wanted to work in teams. They would do this with two or three other people and go visit some students on the list. You pick. I could care less who you go to or you could schedule conferences for families to come to us. Or you could sit in your offices and call people and make phone calls, I could care less how you engage with people. Just do it. And then what we found is in the beginning, everybody hated this idea. And then we got some people to do it. And then they started posting on social media and they started doing like cookie tours, cookie buses. They would drive to people's houses and they would take a picture of their team... And it was something that kind of took off. So that's how we engage people in it. -DL7*

The same mechanism held true at the administrative level. When people feel some agency in terms of how they shape the program, that can be powerful motivation for buy-in,

*"[LEAP] was my first baby. I started here in April, 2021, and they told me in June 2021, 'hey, we have this new initiative that we want you to do.'" So, I was really ecstatic about it because it was something new, I didn't have to take it from anyone, there was no one in the position prior to me. I had the ability to really grow from the ground up and*

then I partnered with XXX, we're in the same office. What better way for us to really know our parents as well, considering that she works with the PROGRAM and I'm the family community engagement manager. This is kind of our way to really get ourselves in the door to meet the parents and have those conversations. So, I was really excited. I'm still excited to see how well my teams have done. They've done a great job. -DL1

### **Buy-in Factor #3: Supporting Home Visitor's Desire for a Deeper Understanding of Students**

One factor that drove teachers' buy-in was the opportunity to get a first-hand look at the lives of their students outside of the school context. Indeed, that experience was transformative for many teachers, as was eloquently articulated by one school leader,

*I think most of the teachers who jumped in initially and volunteered to work in this capacity recognized the incredible need. It was personal, often it was. They had a particular student who they were very, very concerned about and wanted to engage that particular child. But then once getting into it, realized and recognized the much greater need out there, right? So, what ended up happening was that teachers who started this really started to see a shift in their mindset. It went from a blame game, the parents just aren't doing enough, they're not getting their kids to school, shame on families, shame on the government, shame on the politicians, to a real awareness of the struggles that families were facing at this time because they were getting an up-close personal look at what the obstacles and the barriers where we would have. -DL6*

### **Buy-in Factor #4: Providing Adequate Compensation**

Although the amount of funding provided to home visitors was relatively modest, the fact that the work was compensated was an important factor facilitating buy-in, as different district administrators noted,

*Teachers are already stretched thin. Our administrators are already stretched thin. A lot of people are wearing multi-*

*ple hats during the day. And this work is great, but it would not work if we didn't have the stipends. I know that people wouldn't volunteer to say, "Yes, I would work 14-hour days." You know what I mean? I know they have a heart for our children, but people have families as well. So, I always take that into consideration. -DL1*

*Staff did say, like they would tell me when I'd walk in the building, they'd say, "Oh you know, we actually preferred this than doing summer school." And I was like "Oh, OK," so I thought I did get a lot of that. So, I was like, alright, good to know. Some have said that if we are continuing this, I would love to continue. Hopefully they continue [LEAP]. -DL5*

*We kind of leaned initially on existing staff and I think a lot of them felt initially like this is one more thing to do. But I think once they saw the value of the payoff, these smaller interventions with students and families, I think that subsided quite a bit. We also looked to provide professional development and training during their PhD times and also for buy-in... We also gave our staff the opportunity to do before and after school work with students and families. So, they were able to submit timesheets for beyond the school day. So, when one teacher said to me or really more counselor, social worker, psychologist, "I just don't have enough hours in the day." That was a way to say, "well, if you're willing to do the time, we'll compensate you for that." And so that was also highly engaging. -DL14*

### **Key Factors Related to District Leader and Home Visitor Burnout**

Just as there were some common factors related to buy-in to the program, there were common factors that predictably related to burnout. In particular, three main factors emerged as predictive of burnout based on our conversations with district leaders. These factors were related to overwork and inadequate compensation, conflicting priorities, and role confusion.

#### **Burnout Factor #1: Overworked**

### **Teachers and Delayed and/or Inadequate Compensation for Home Visits**

One of the most important factors related to burnout was the fact that teachers, and other staff, were being asked to do too many things. This situation was only exacerbated by the pandemic and it ultimately reached a breaking point for many people. As two district leaders explained,

*We've added so much more and asked our teachers to do so much more than years prior. I think at a certain point, it's just hard to really get them to, to do even more. -DL2*

*It was the staffing issues. So, a lot of the teachers were taking on extra students in their class because they were down a kindergarten or first grade teacher. So, they had to take other teachers' students and a lot of them didn't want to work after hours. We kind of highlighted the fact that if you were a 10-month employee, it was kind of to your benefit because you could do this work over the summer and still receive a paycheck. Any incentive, we tried it.... And if you're already starting the [LEAP] relationship, feeling like, I'm burdened, it's not gonna work, then the whole term of having that hand-in-hand partnership is just not gonna work... So, that's when we decided. I had a conversation with the Superintendent to say, "With this particular school, I don't think it's really working. They're not producing numbers as large as the other schools. This may be something that we wanna reconsider." And then that's what we did. -DL1*

However, not all teachers and staff were too burned out to participate. As previously noted, many believed in the importance of the intervention and signed-on to do it. However, once they became involved, a major source of burnout related to the relative degree of compensation – or the fact that they were not getting compensated in a reasonable amount of time or in a manner to which they were led to believe they would be. For example, various district leaders explain it as follows,

*So, it was part of the actual proposal*

to take teachers to do visits after hours and some money set aside absolutely at the high school level. Of course, sadly to say, when it came the time to draw down the money from our RESC. That money that didn't make it to us. So many teachers got really frustrated because they were not getting compensated. So, they said we are not doing it again... I cannot blame them there. They're so overwhelmed and tapped out and with everything they do that adding extra hours to their day and not getting compensated. -DL15

...in the beginning, it just became really challenging to have to put money up and then take weeks and weeks and weeks to be reimbursed. And are we doing the work because of the money? No, that's not why anybody gets into education, but it's a struggle for everyone. So, someone funds \$150.00 and then has to wait a month to get paid back or reimbursed, you know? And there was a lot of that in the beginning, but that's not an easy thing...And then you keep getting these emails with, "Oh, we're gonna have another training session"... my staff's not going to another training session because they're no longer being paid. - DL4

The issue of funding also caused trust or burnout at the larger level of funding for the overall program. When new initiatives are funded and then that funding is stripped, that creates a level of burnout due to mistrust that is counterproductive. As one district leader pointed out, I also think the funding goes away once again. It's something looked at in the community or looked at by other staff in the school as just another initiative. Just another thing. So, when you don't put deep roots into something and the first wind that blows can blow it over, people are like, "Yeah, I knew it. I knew it wasn't gonna work." So there goes your buy-in. -DL12

### **Burnout Factor #2: Conflicting Priorities for Home Visitors**

Given that a lot of the home visitations took place after school hours and on weekends during the school year, it made it challenging for teachers who had family obligations of their own,

The feedback I heard was that not a lot of teachers wanted to be available, you know, they've got kids to take to soccer practice and all those kinds of things. -DL3

One of the harder things is it's great during the summer when there's time but it becomes more difficult during the school year. For example, I do clubs after school two days a week that go to 4:30. So you know, finding that time to schedule the meetings. I really think that the best way to do the visits is to ensure that somehow you have some follow up to the visit. -DL9

### **Burnout Factor #3: District Leader Role Confusion as to Who was Responsible for What with LEAP Funds**

Finally, another key factor that caused tension within the intervention had to do with role confusion. This was more typically observed at the district level, and in particular when it came to working with community partners or Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs), who were often the direct recipients of the funding.

Yes, there was some communication between the high school and the RESC. And for a long time, we thought that LEAP was just for the high school. And it wasn't until this past June that we found out that actually, it was supposed to be district wide. - DL15

I like to say of having all these supports, and I think LEAP became one of those and it became, in my analysis, really duplicative, so we already have a FSL's (family school liaisons) in every school. They are already doing home visits and outreach and office hours. Some of our schools even have a dedicated, not all but a few, have a dedicated office, a family Resource Center for which we do get some State funding as well. So, I think another one of the trip-ups became, "So how do we define LEAP home visits differently from our existing family school liaison home visits? It really felt duplicative and a little bit confusing as to how to use this interface and not confound our current efforts. -DL3

I think in terms of the challenges for us internally is the lack of good coordination with the building-based teams that work with those same families. And what we want to do is we don't want to substitute the work that schools need to do, right? We wanna make sure that schools are the ones that connect with families, that schools are the ones that work hard to build relationships with families. We don't want to outsource that because the moment you outsource that, you get, you know, you get families going somewhere else. You want families to go to their schools to ask for help. And so that's the challenge. There's been a lot of families that have really come around, as far as building relationships and the same thing I told the coordinators. I think it's great that the families fall in love with you, but ultimately you need to circle that back to the teacher. You have to circle that back to the building even though you represent the school system and the institution of the school. That's wonderful, but we need them to air quotes, "Kind of fall in love with the entire system, not just you" because you can up and go and take a job somewhere else and then what? -DL13

A big part of the [Engagement] team's task is to provide support to families whatever that might look like. The superintendent stated, "There is no problem [that these families are having] that is not in your job description." For example, if a family had a hot water heater that broke down, [Community Partner team would help them to get hot water replaced in the house. -DL8

### **Summary of Key Factors Related to District Leader and Home Visitor Buy-in and Burnout**

The four main factors that district leaders identified as being most closely associated with buy-in to the project were as follows:

1. Safety
2. Trust and Flexibility
3. Desire for a Deeper Understanding of Students
4. Compensation

The three main factors that district leaders identified as being most closely

associated with burnout or challenge spots with the implementation of LEAP were:

1. Delayed and/or Inadequate Compensation along with Overwork
2. Conflicting Priorities
3. Role confusion regarding who was responsible for what at the higher decision-making levels

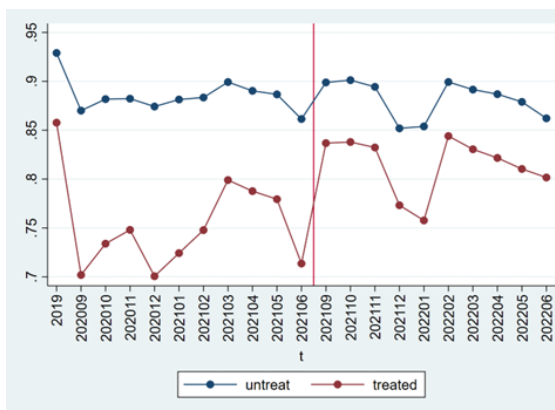
### Research Question #3: Did Attendance Rates Improve for Students Receiving LEAP?

#### Descriptive Trends in Attendance

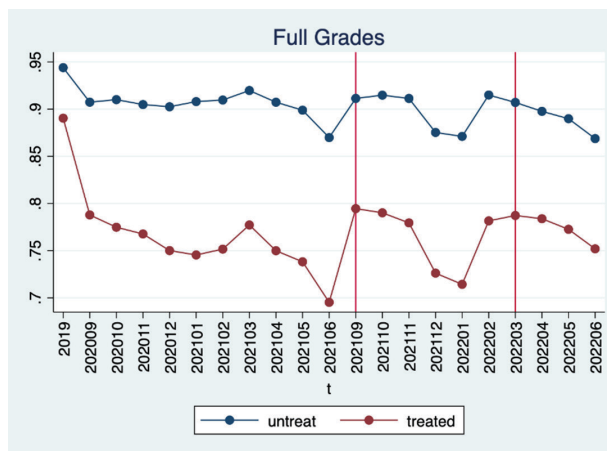
Figure 1 presents monthly average attendance rates for LEAP treated students (red) and all other non-treated students attending LEAP participating districts (blue). Figure 1A shows monthly attendance rates for students that received a first home LEAP visit (i.e., were treated by LEAP) in the summer of 2021 versus all other students, while Figure 1B shows monthly attendance rates for students treated during the 2021-22 school year. The vertical red line in both figures represents the start of the 2021-22 school year when all students returned to in-person instruction. In both figures, the left most observation corresponds to average yearly attendance rates during the 2019-20 school year, while all other observations correspond to monthly attendance rates starting in September of 2020 and going through June of 2022. As is evident in Figures 1A and 1B, regardless of whether a student was treated during the summer of 2021 or during the 2021-22 school year, there is a clear jump up in attendance rates among treated students and to a lesser extent among non-treated students in September of 2021. This jump in attendance most likely is associated with the return to in-person classes across all districts in the 2021-22 school year and thus is not a direct consequence of being treated by LEAP. Nevertheless, both figures, but particularly the figure associated with summer 2021 LEAP treatment, show a convergence in attendance rates between LEAP treated students and non-treated students during the 2021-22 school year. For students treated during the summer, the gap in attendance rates between treated and non-treated students drops from approximately 10 percentage points

## Figure 1. Mean Attendance Rates by Month by LEAP Treatment Status

### A. Attendance Ratio for Students Treated in Summer 2021



### B. Attendance Ratio for Students Treated during 2021-22 School Year



during the 2020-21 school year to 5 percentage points during the 2021-22 school year. Similarly, for students treated during the 2021-22 school year, the gap in attendance rates between treated and non-treated students drops from approximately 15 percentage points during the 2020-21 school year to 10 percentage points during the 2021-22 school year. Of course, these trends are descriptive in nature and could be driven by a host of factors including both participation in LEAP and other factors. Thus, we now turn to isolating the causal effect of LEAP on student attendance rates.

#### A) Event Study Estimates

We begin by presenting the impact of being treated by LEAP on student attendance rates by plotting the estimated  $\hat{\gamma}_j$ 's and associated 90 percent confidence

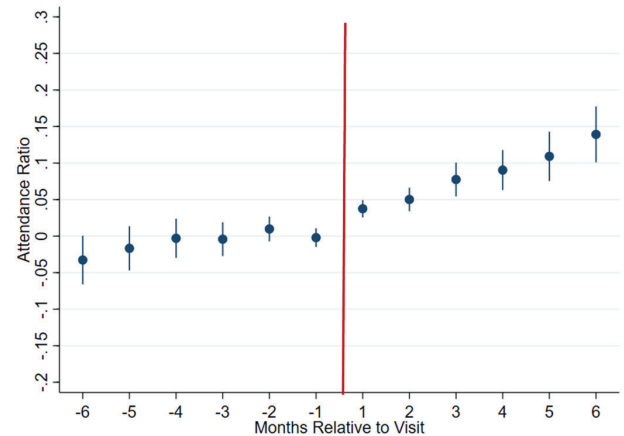
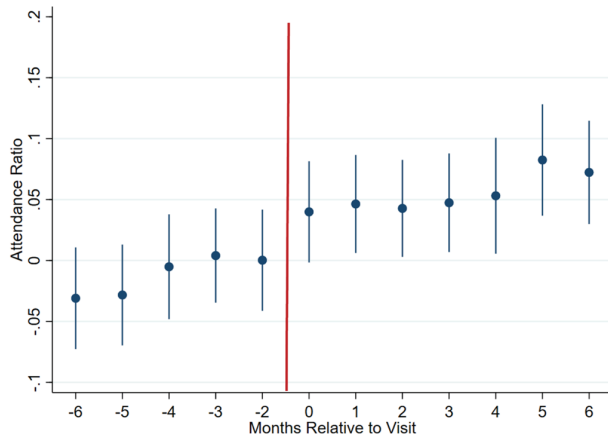
intervals (illustrated as vertical bars) from our event study specification given by Equation (1). Figures 2A and 2B show the impact of LEAP treatment on student attendance rates for students treated in the summer of 2021 (Figure 2A) and students treated during the 2021-22 school year (Figure 2B). As noted previously, given that New Haven Public Schools did not implement LEAP as intended, Figures 2A and 2B omit students attending New Haven Public Schools.

The horizontal axis in both figures 2A and 2B delineates the months since a student was treated by a LEAP home visit. For example, the label “-6” denotes that the estimate corresponds to 6 months or more prior to a student being treated by LEAP while the label “-2” denotes that the estimate corresponds to

## Figure 2. Event Study Estimates of Impact of LEAP on Attendance Ratio: Students Treated in and Summer 2021 and 2021-22 SY No NPS

### A. LEAP Time of First Visit Summer 2021

### B. LEAP Time of First Visit 2021-22 SY



2 months prior to being treated. Similarly, the label “6” denotes that the estimate corresponds to 6 months or more after a student was treated by LEAP while the label “2” denotes that the estimate corresponds to 2 months after the student was treated. The vertical red line indicates the relative month of treatment (i.e., the first LEAP visit). The vertical axis in both figures denotes the change in attendance rates for students treated by LEAP relative to the control group (i.e., students not treated by LEAP). For both event study graphs, the sample includes all students treated by LEAP other than those from New Haven Public Schools. Our rationale for omitting New Haven is discussed in detail later in the report.

In both Figure 2A and 2B, there is no evidence of differential trending between students treated by LEAP and those not treated (control group) prior to the first LEAP visit (again, denoted by the vertical red line). The estimated pre-treatment effects are close to zero or small in magnitude and all are statistically insignificant. The lack of differential trending prior to LEAP treatment provides evidence that our main identification assumption—the parallel trends assumption—holds and that our control group provides a reasonable counterfactual for what would have happened to the attendance rates of treated students had they not been treated by LEAP. In con-

trast to the pre-treatment effects, there is clear evidence of an upward trend in attendance rates post treatment in both Figure 2A and 2B. In both figures, attendance rates increase by approximately 4 percentage points in the month immediately following the first LEAP visit. Attendance rates then continue to rise in subsequent months reaching an increase of approximately 7 percentage points for students treated in the summer of 2021 and nearly 15 percentage points for student treated during the 2021-22 school year.

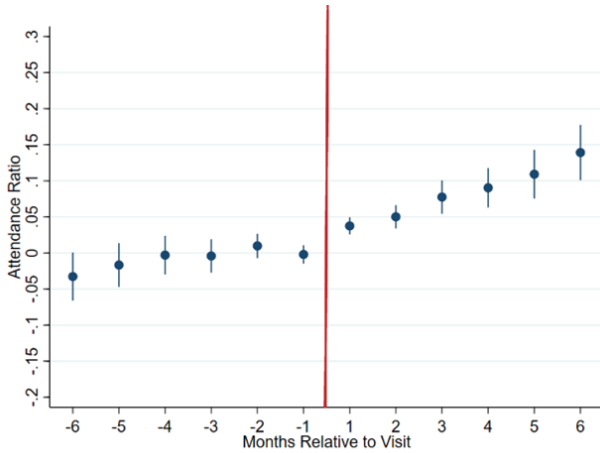
Figures 3A – 3D, presents separate event study estimates for selected LEAP participating districts. Figure 3A simply replicates Figure 2B for comparison purposes. Figure 3B presents event study estimates for all LEAP participating districts other than New Haven and Hartford Public Schools. Figures 3C and 3D present event study estimates for two of the largest LEAP participating school districts, namely New Haven Public Schools and Hartford Public Schools. With the exception of New Haven Public Schools, there is clear evidence in all other figures of an upward trend in attendance rates after the first LEAP visit. The upward trend is particularly dramatic for Hartford Public Schools (Figure 3D) where attendance rates increase by slightly less than 30 percentage points 6 months or more after treatment. All

LEAP districts other than Hartford and New Haven (Figure 3B) also experience significant but smaller increases in attendance post treatment with attendance rates increasing by 10 percentage points 6 months or more after treatment. In contrast, there is no evidence of any positive impacts of LEAP visits for New Haven Public Schools. None of the estimated treatment effects in either the pre- or post-treatment period are statistically significant, and all are quite small in magnitude.

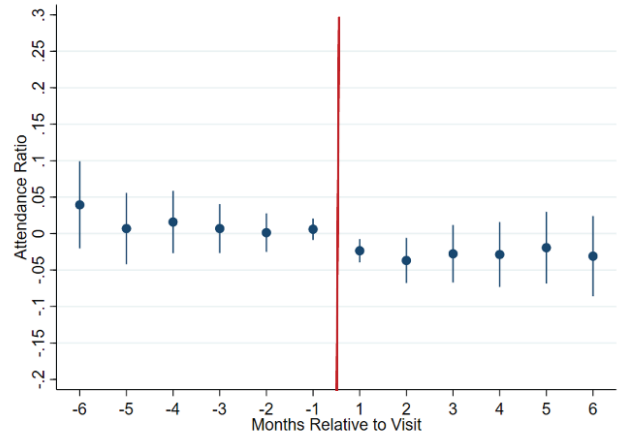
Why does LEAP appear to have no impact in New Haven Public Schools? While we do not have a definitive answer to that question, there are several possibilities. First, unlike other school districts, New Haven implemented the LEAP program by contracting out to a nonprofit organization who then primarily canvassed neighborhoods that were identified as having high concentrations of chronically absent students rather than doing one-on-one individual LEAP visits with students. Second, district administrators noted that in many cases students were coded as having a LEAP visit (i.e., treated) even when the person conducting the home visit was unable to meet with a parent or child because no one was home or no one would come to the door. Thus, the treatment variable (date of first LEAP visit) likely suffers from significant measurement error

**Figure 3. Event Study Estimates of Impact of LEAP on Attendance Ratio**

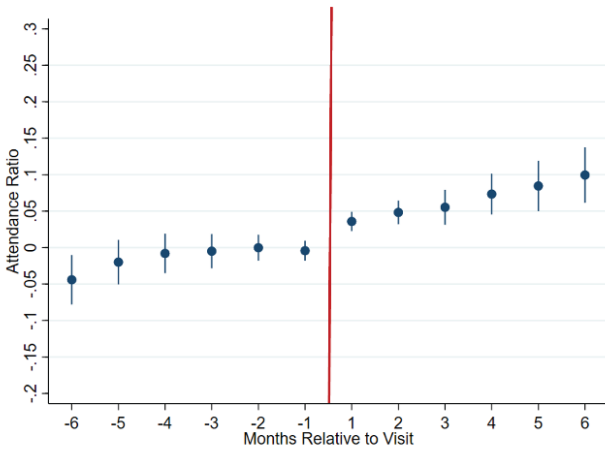
**A. All LEAP Districts other than NPS**



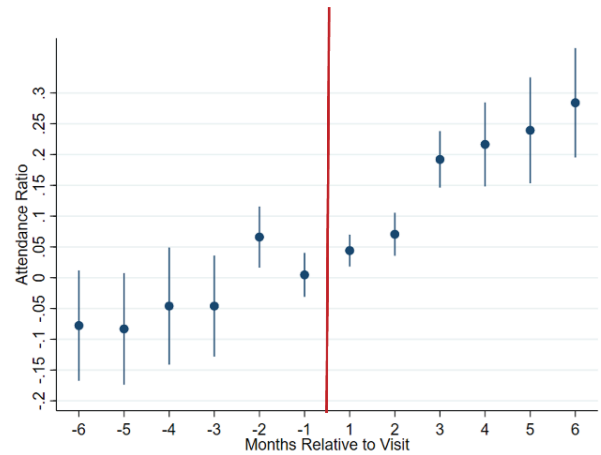
**C. New Haven Public Schools (NPS)**



**B. All LEAP Districts other than NPS & HPS**



**D. Hartford Public Schools (HPS)**



which would bias any treatment effects towards zero.

In contrast to New Haven, in Hartford Public Schools, where we see relatively large treatment effects, district administrators carefully analyzed attendance data to identify chronically absent students and then created school level lists based on tiers of absenteeism. The district then made appointments with families and students for home visits but also knocked on the doors of specific families when it appeared critical to do so. Finally, while Hartford scheduled community canvassing as an engagement strategy during key points of the year, these are not counted as LEAP home visits.

**Research Question #4:  
Did Attendance Rates Vary by Grade, Student Demographics, or Type of Individual Conducting the Home Visit?**

**Event Study Estimates by Grade Level**

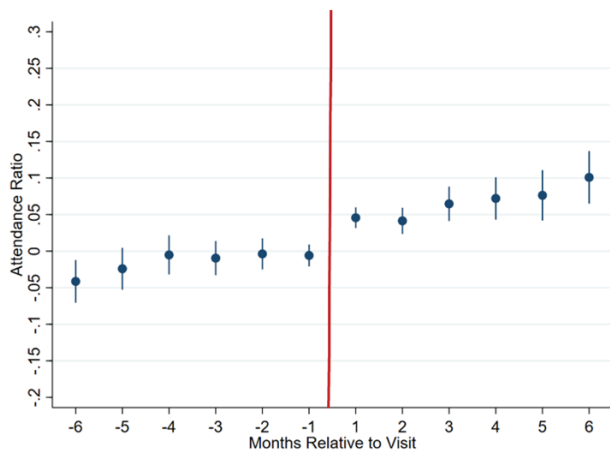
Figures 4A – 4C present event study estimates separately by grade level where grades are grouped into pre-kindergarten through 5th grade (elementary grades), 6th through 8th grade (middle school grades), and 9th through 12th grades. Note that in light of the issues noted previously, in these event studies and all subsequent tables and figures we drop New Haven Public Schools from

the analysis and focus on the remaining 14 LEAP participating districts. Furthermore, because the vast majority (85%) of students were treated during the 2021-22 school year, in all subsequent tables and figures we focus on students treated during the 2021-22 school year. Across all three figures we once again see little evidence that attendance rates were trending either higher or lower prior to treatment and then clear evidence of an upward trend in attendance rates following the first LEAP visit. For the PK – 5th grades, attendance rates increase by approximately 10 percentage points six months or more after the first LEAP visit while for middle and high school grades attendance rates increase by 20 percentage points six months or more after the

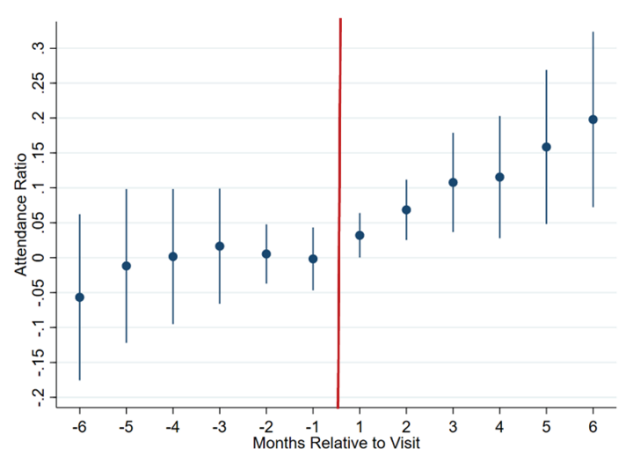


**Figure 4. Event Study Estimates by Grade Level: Students Treated in 2021-22 All LEAP Districts other than NPS**

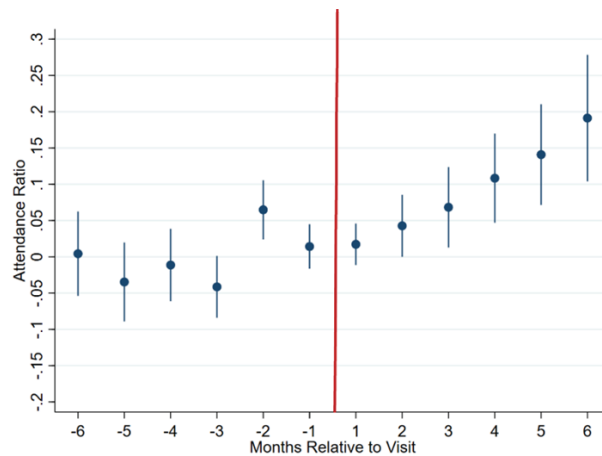
**A. Grades PK-5**



**C. Grades 9-12**



**B. Grades 6-8**



first visit. Thus, Figures 4A - 4C suggest that the impact of LEAP is significantly larger in later grades.

**Event Study Estimates by Follow-Up Visits**

Figures 2 through 4 show an upward trend in attendance following the first LEAP visit, both overall and by grade level. One potential explanation for that upward trend is that follow-up visits reinforce the attendance effects of the first LEAP visit. Among students treated during the 2021-22 school year, 43% had no follow-up visits, 38% had one follow-up visit, 9% had two follow-up visits and the remaining 10% had more than two follow-up visits. To examine

whether the number of follow-up visits can explain the upward trend in attendance rates we observe post treatment, in Figures 5A and 5B we present event study estimates separately for students that received no follow-up visits (Figure 5A) and those that received one or more follow-up visits (Figure 5B).<sup>6</sup> Interesting, if anything, the impact of the first LEAP visit is slightly stronger for students that received no follow-up visits compared to those that received one or more visits, although the differences are not statistically significant. The lack of any clear evidence that follow-up visits enhance the attendance effects of the first LEAP visit could potentially be explained by the negative selection (i.e.,

more difficult to engage) of students that receive multiple follow-up visits.

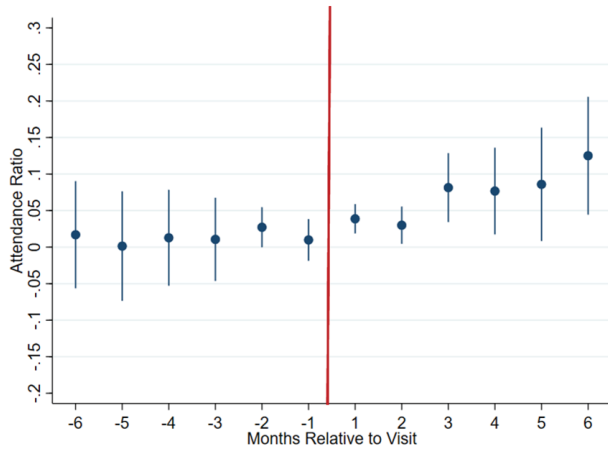
**Difference-in-Differences (DiD) Estimates**

In Table 4 we present DiD estimates based on equation (2). Columns 1 and 2 present DiD estimates for all LEAP districts other than New Haven Public Schools, while columns 3 – 8 present separate estimates for PK – 5th grade, 6th – 8th grade, and 9th – 12th grade, respectively. The first column in each pair of results presents DiD estimates based on specifications with no control variables while the second column includes the full set of controls, namely indicators for a student’s gender, race

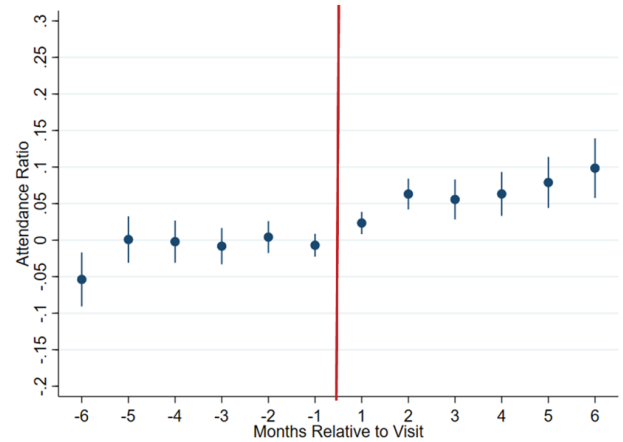
<sup>6</sup> We are unable to estimate event study models for students that receive more than one follow-up visits due to the small sample size.

**Figure 5. Event Study Estimates by Number of Follow-up Visits: Students Treated in 2021-22 All LEAP Districts other than NPS**

**A. Students who received no follow-up visit**



**B. Students who received one or more follow-up visits**



and ethnicity, free lunch eligibility status, English learner status and special education status, all interacted with a linear time trend.

The estimates reported in Table 4 appear to be robust to the inclusion or exclusion of control variables. Indeed, this is exactly what one would expect if the timing of LEAP visits is relatively random, implying our DiD estimates approximate a random experiment. In light of that, we focused on our preferred estimates which include the controls listed above. Focusing on the results reported in column 2, the estimates suggest that in the month immediately following the first LEAP visit, attendance rates “jump” up by approximately 2 percentage points and then continue to increase by approximately 1 percentage point in each subsequent month. Consistent with the event study diagrams in Figures 4A – 4C, the effect of LEAP visits on the growth trend in attendance for elementary grades (PK – 5) is approximately half as large as for middle or high school grades (0.00579 vs. 0.0150), suggesting once again that LEAP had a larger impact on students

treated in middle and high school. Table A3 in the appendix presents DiD estimates for each individual grade. Consistent with the results reported in Table 4, treatment effects tended to be larger in higher grades, although the estimates are a bit noisy (i.e., less consistent) given the relatively small sample sizes associated with each individual grade.

Figure 6 graphically summarizes the impact of LEAP on student attendance rates for the grade levels represented in Table 4. Specifically, using the coefficient estimates reported in Table 4, Figure 5 plots the estimated impact of treatment at 9 months after the first LEAP visit and the associated 95% confidence intervals for those estimates. Nine months after the first LEAP visit, students in grades 6-12 experience approximately a 16-percentage point increase in attendance rates relative to untreated students. In contrast, students in grades PK – 5, experience approximately an 8-percentage point increase in attendance. Figure A1 in the Appendix provides a visual summary of the estimated treatment effects at 9 months after the first LEAP visit in-

dividual by grade. With the exception of students in 12th grade, treatment effects are larger for students in 6th grade or higher relative to lower grades.

Table 5 and Figure 7 present estimates of the impact of LEAP treatment by student demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. The estimates reported in Table 5 are from specifications similar to equation (2) except we now illustrate the interaction between both the post treatment “jump” variable and the post treatment trend variable with a given student characteristic. We then used those estimates to calculate the predicted treatment effect for each student characteristic 9 months after treatment and plot those estimates along with their 95% confidence intervals in Figure 7. As can be seen in Figure 6, the impact of LEAP treatment is remarkably similar across students with different demographic or socioeconomic characteristics. The one exception is students who are English Language Learners who have treatment effects that approximately half as large as the other student groups.

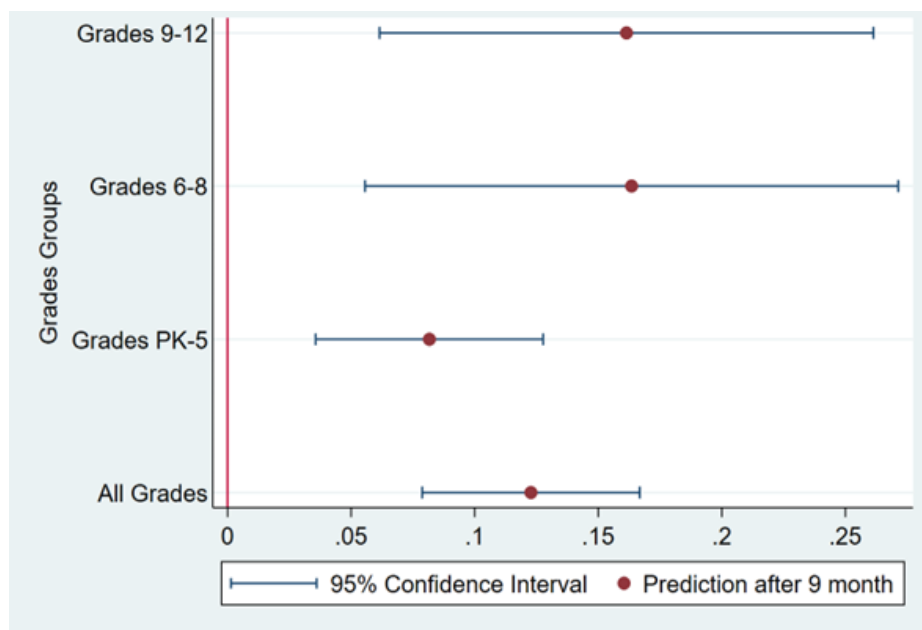
**Research Question #5:**

**Table 4: Difference-in-Differences Estimates by Grade Level: All Districts Other than NPS**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	All Grades		Grades PK-5		Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12	
Post Treatment	0.0205***	0.0202***	0.0297***	0.0296***	0.0258	0.0281*	0.00548	0.0035
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.00653)	(0.006)	(0.0162)	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Post Treatment Trend	0.0109***	0.0114***	0.00561**	0.00579**	0.0157***	0.0150**	0.0167***	0.0175***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.00239)	(0.002)	(0.00557)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)
				0.08171		0.1632		
Controls	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Observations	65,287	65,287	26,817	26,817	12,484	12,484	25,986	25,986
R-squared	0.735	0.736	0.548	0.549	0.631	0.634	0.752	0.754

Notes: Sample consists of students treated during the 2021-22 school year dropping New Haven Public Schools. All specifications include student-by-cohort fixed effects and grade-by-district-by-month fixed effects. Specifications in columns 2, 4, 6 and 8 include controls for student gender, race and ethnicity, free lunch eligibility status, English learner status and special education status. Robust standard errors clustered at the students and month-by-district-by-grade in parentheses\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Figure 6. Difference-in-Differences Estimates by Grade Level: Nine Months After Treatment**

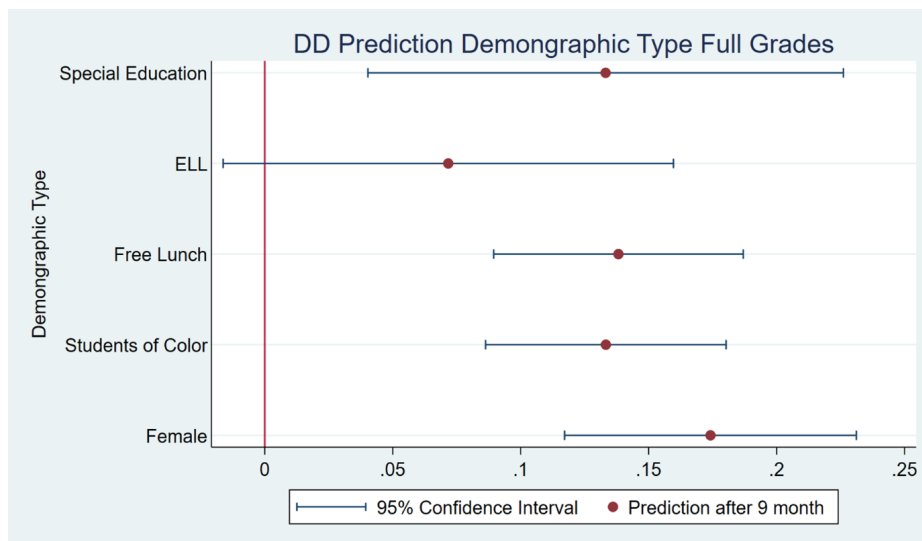


**Table 5: Difference-in-Differences Estimates with Student Demographic Interactions**

Variables	(1) Female	(2) Student of Color	(3) Free Lunch	(4) ELL	(5) Special Education
Post Treatment	0.0138	0.0170	0.0118	0.0262***	0.0214***
	(0.00854)	(0.0140)	(0.0137)	(0.00712)	(0.00734)
Post Treatment Interaction	0.0123	0.00379	0.0111	-0.0240	-0.00548
	(0.0122)	(0.0149)	(0.0156)	(0.0158)	(0.0155)
Post Treatment Trend	0.00724***	0.00627*	0.00553	0.0123***	0.0109***
	(0.00271)	(0.00370)	(0.00392)	(0.00252)	(0.00239)
Post Treatment Trend Interaction	0.00921***	0.00623	0.00728*	-0.00462	0.00211
Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	65,287	65,287	65,287	65,287	65,287
R-squared	0.736	0.736	0.736	0.736	0.736

*Notes:* Sample consists of students treated during the 2021-22 school year dropping New Haven Public Schools. All specifications include controls for student gender, race and ethnicity, free lunch eligibility status, English learner status and special education status as well as student-by-cohort fixed effects and grade-by-district-by-month fixed effects. Robust standard errors clustered at the students and month-by-district-by-grade in parentheses\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Figure 7. Difference-in-Differences Estimates Nine Months After Treatment by Student Demographics**

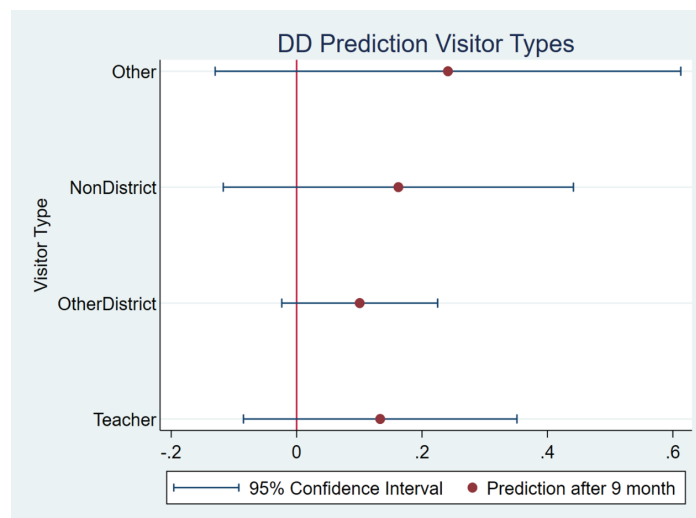


**Table 6: Difference-in-Differences Estimates with Personnel Type Interactions**

Variables	(1) Teacher	(2) Other District Employee	(3) Non-District Employee	(4) Other
Post Treatment	0.0156	0.0290*	0.0162	0.0220*
	(0.0140)	(0.0166)	(0.0137)	(0.0131)
Post Treatment Interaction	0.0177	-0.0164	0.0169	-0.157*
	(0.0196)	(0.0172)	(0.0270)	(0.0913)
Post Treatment Trend	0.0110*	0.0131	0.0116*	0.0107
	(0.00614)	(0.0101)	(0.00681)	(0.00681)
Post Treatment Trend Interaction	6.14e-05	-0.00336	0.00271	0.0311
	(0.0113)	(0.00988)	(0.0156)	(0.0296)
Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	33,103	33,103	33,103	33,103
R-squared	0.755	0.755	0.755	0.755

*Notes:* Sample consists of students treated during the 2021-22 school year dropping New Haven Public Schools. Sample size is smaller than in Table 5 due to missing information on the type of personnel conducting the LEAP visit. The category other includes cases where the data simply note “Other” and other cases where the location is noted to be a coffee house or a “neutral location.” All specifications include controls for student gender, race and ethnicity, free lunch eligibility status, English learner status and special education status as well as student-by-cohort fixed effects and grade-by-district-by-month fixed effects. Robust standard errors clustered at the students and month-by-district-by-grade in parentheses\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Figure 8. Difference-in-Differences Estimates Nine Months After Treatment by Personnel Type**

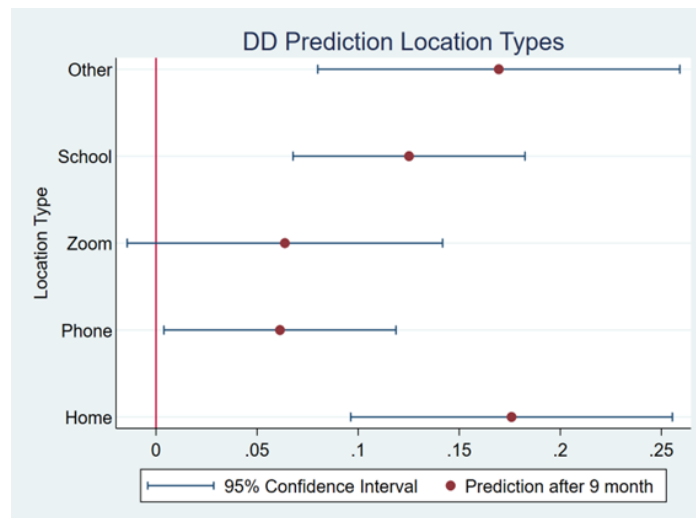


**Table 7: Difference-in-Differences Estimates with Location Type Interactions**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Home	Phone	Zoom	School	Other
Post Treatment	0.0181**	0.0262***	0.0198**	0.0215***	0.0225***
	(0.00892)	(0.00978)	(0.00812)	(0.00783)	(0.00799)
Post Treatment Interaction	0.00757	-0.0127	0.0216	0	-0.00859
	(0.0136)	(0.0125)	(0.0173)	(9.66e-08)	(0.0203)
Post Treatment Trend	0.00690**	0.0155***	0.0122***	0.0115***	0.0110***
	(0.00273)	(0.00377)	(0.00304)	(0.00298)	(0.00306)
Post Treatment Trend Interaction	0.00979**	-0.0101***	-0.00969**	0	0.00627
	(0.00418)	(0.00381)	(0.00423)	(8.08e-09)	(0.00504)
Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	45,458	45,458	45,458	45,458	45,458
R-squared	0.751	0.751	0.750	0.750	0.750

Notes: Sample consists of students treated during the 2021-22 school year dropping New Haven Public Schools. Sample size is smaller than in Table 5 due to missing information on the location of LEAP visits. All specifications include controls for student gender, race and ethnicity, free lunch eligibility status, English learner status and special education status as well as student-by-cohort fixed effects and grade-by-district-by-month fixed effects. Robust standard errors clustered at the students and month-by-district-by-grade in parentheses\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Figure 9. Difference-in-Differences Estimates Nine Months After Treatment by Location Type**



## What Characteristics of the Home Visits are Related to Increased Student Attendance?

Table 6 and Figure 8 present estimates of the impact of LEAP treatment by the category of personnel conducting the first LEAP visit. Once again, there appears to be only minimal heterogeneity in LEAP impacts based on the type of personnel conducting the home visits. As shown in Figure 8, nine months after the initial LEAP visit, attendance rates increase by between approximately 15 and 20 percentage points, regardless of who conducts the visit.

Table 7 and Figure 9 present estimates of the impact of LEAP treatment by the location of where the first LEAP visit was conducted. Here, there is significant evidence of heterogeneous treatment effects across location. First, LEAP visits that occur at a student's home had significantly larger impacts on attendance than first LEAP visits that occurred via Zoom or phone. LEAP visits at a student's school also had larger impacts on attendance relative to Zoom or phone visits and the "catch all" category of other types of visits also outperformed Zoom or phone visits.

Thus, the quantitative results show that there did not seem to be a significant impact on attendance based on the official role of person conducting the home visits (e.g., teacher, school staff, community partner). However, visits that took place in-person did significantly increase attendance relative to visits conducted via phone or zoom. The qualitative results probed participants about other factors that the felt may have impacted student attendance that were not necessarily captured in the quantitative results. One factor that came up as particularly important was the use of incentives for increasing student attendance.

### **The Use of Incentives for Increasing Student Attendance**

The 15 district leaders were asked about their approach to incentivizing students in order to get them to engage. The leaders reported using a wide variety of strategies that ranged from using tangible incentives, such as parties and

swag, to those designed to connect with the students based on their identities, priorities, and values.

Some tangible benefits that were offered to students included everything from hospitality bags, to swag items, to food parties. District leaders noted the following,

*So, we felt we were going to use the money for some supplies. We bought; I'll say hospitality bags. So, when we went on the home visit, we were taking things like crayons and pencils and keychains, things that said, [our CITY] on them. We would also put in a lot of information sheets in both English and Spanish. They said this is how you get in touch with this person if you need, if you don't understand scheduling, etc. I know in the middle school ones, they actually put quite a bit of food in them... We're on 100% free and reduced lunch. So, in middle school, they did that for the hospitality bags because they have a food bank. We do know that food is always well received. -DL9*

*We saw that incentives worked really well for high school. Incentives were great. They're even emailing me now because I have tons of swag (e.g., hoodies, sweatshirts, cups, pins), things that just came in and they're like, "We need all that stuff to get kids to come to school" and they have, like, a lunch that they did at SCHOOL where they got 1000 Whoppers from Burger King and Burger King donated them and they had a special lunch for coming to school... But elementary was more of that peer-to-peer type of relationship. You know, you always want your friends to think the best of you. You know what I mean? And we kind of use that to our advantage. But even being able to bring things to draw them in, so when we're going there making sure that we have things for them to play with like tactical things and things like that for them to build their relationship. But I think with high school and middle school, it was the incentives. -DL1*

*We're basically saying, "OK if we wanted to have a group of 30 kids come in to do a tutoring session because we noticed they fell behind..." With the Y, you can pull somebody in and bring them there.*

*They have a little classroom, you know? Like, "Come on in, we're gonna have pizza." You just start to build that trusting kind of, "I'm here as a continuous support mechanism" as opposed to, "We hope you show up on Wednesday, we noticed you haven't been showing up to school as much." Like, if that's all it took, we wouldn't be having this conversation, you and I right now. -DL4*

Beyond the tangible incentives, some districts also provided students with opportunities such as credit recovery as an enticement to re-engage with school and reduce chronic absenteeism.

*We found a lot of kids just felt like, "Well, I failed the first quarter, chances are I'm not gonna get credit." And so that was a barrier to come into school. So that's where we really learned from our work with students and families to say, "OK, if we could provide an opportunity where you could get back that credit, get back on track, become a sophomore next year, would you just start coming more?" And overwhelmingly, I would say the vast majority of kids positively were engaged in those types of things. -DL14*

In addition, some visits had unanticipated benefits which helped to build trust and re-engage students, as noted by one district leader,

*We saw some unanticipated benefits from this right, as Admini just mentioned. Some of our home visits actually became college entrance counseling sessions, that was something that we didn't go into expecting to happen, right? -DL6*

Finally, as one district leader noted, one important way to engage students is to ensure that there is something at the school that excites them,

*Why don't kids come to school? There's a lot of reasons, but making our schools a great place, so kids wanna be there [is important]. Kids don't necessarily want to be in school because they don't wanna go to math intervention for five periods in a row. And those in cases, people like me say, "Hey, listen, there used to be an awesome music program here" because that kid likes band and he has band seventh period and he's coming for 6 other periods because you gotta go to band*

or have a sports team or whatever. We have to make our schools vibrant, awesome places that kids wanna be at... -DL7

### Summary

Some key characteristics of LEAP that seemed to motivate students increase student attendance, at least from the perspective of the district leaders included both directly tangible elements and other element aimed at appealing more to student motivations. Tangible elements included things like hospitality bags, school swag such as sweatshirts and pins, as well as food parties for students who attendance had improved. Elements that appealed more toward student motivation included opportunities for credit recovery for students who had done poorly in one semester of classes, college counseling, and helping students to find something at the school that excited them and got them re-engaged with the school community.

### What Characteristics of the Home Visit were Related to Increased Student Attendance?: Home Visitor Perspectives

The fifth research question asked, “What characteristics of the home visits are related to increased student attendance (e.g., in-person at home vs. other location, number of visits, etc.)?” Eight characteristics emerged.

#### **Characteristic #1: Personalized, Dynamic Support: Dependent on Family’s Need**

Some school districts were providing home-visits for families before LEAP. According to the district-level administrators that we interviewed, these programs had various degrees of success prior to LEAP, but LEAP was far more beneficial. Specifically, LEAP provided them with more structure, support, inter- and intra-district coordination, and more opportunities for home visits to occur and for schools to build stronger, more positive relationships with families.

Home visitors in six of the nine (66%) group interviews shared details about how many home-visits they participated in. The caseloads of families that home

visitors worked with ranged from three to over 25. One home visitor said that they conducted over 70 home visits in total. Additionally, during some of the home visits, home visitors helped to support the other children in the family (not only the ones identified to be chronically absent). Home visitors also shared that the number of visits for each family varied depending on the need. One home visitor said that while they checked in with families once a week, they also saw some families three times a week and even visited families on the weekend. Additionally, one home visitor stated,

*We had families that we visited numerous times throughout the year and, honestly, there were families that we didn’t really need to see again. But we had some who were in the bus line [at school] saying, “Can you come out again?”*

While many of the home visitors agreed that the number of visits per family varied, they would contact certain families more often, just to check-in, because they needed more support.

**Flexible Meeting Locations.** In addition to the amount of home visits, some home visitors shared that initially some parents did not want them to come into the house, so they would meet outside. In addition to home visits, home visitors said that they also met with parents in the community, at the library, over the phone, and virtually. While home visitors were open to connecting with the families in various ways, one home visitor stated:

*I find that face to face contact really makes a difference. I keep in contact with families and, and students over the phone, but when I meet with them and in person, there’s a difference in how they interact with me. I think that they really are much more comfortable in their own environment, and it gives us the opportunity to get to know them.*

Further, another home visitor added:

*The phone is like an initial [step], but think about so many people, especially with robocalls, people are not picking up their phone, or they don’t want to, or especially around that time, it was like a fear of some parents when I would*

*ask them like, “Why didn’t you pick up the phone?” and they’re like, “there’s so much bad news, I just didn’t want to hear it.” That was an interesting perspective. But when you’re there, you could troubleshoot, you could resolve so many issues, instead of playing phone tag for three weeks.*

Overall, LEAP home visitors were flexible in meeting the needs for parents and creating access for them. Still, the home visitors prioritized face-to-face communication with families to build deeper connections.

District-level LEAP administrators spoke to the fact that some families did not feel comfortable having outsiders in their home, so in these cases, home visitors met with families in the school, at a convenient place (such as the food court in the mall, library, or local children’s museum, or in the school).

#### **Characteristic #2: Continued Training and Support for the Visitors**

In order to meet goals and expectations for LEAP, seven out of the nine (77%) group interviews discussed the necessary training. Throughout the interviews, LEAP home visitors shared different methods of training that they received such as a 2-hour training video, training through outside programs, a set of six training modules, and more. Home visitors shared that the district-level administrators made the training programs accessible by allowing them to view the recorded training videos outside of their work time and providing ongoing training throughout the program. One home visitor also shared that there were other school personnel there to support them, such as other home visitors or school’s permanent family engagement specialists. Overall, home visitors felt that there was sufficient training and support for the program, and one home visitor described:

*We definitely had plenty of training and the best training was actually getting there and doing it.*

#### **Characteristic #3: A Process of Collaboration**

Home visitors also shared that they



worked as a team to best assist the families. They had a variety of home visitors including staff who were paraprofessionals, teachers, ESL teachers, community home visitors, guidance counselors, social workers and more. These groups not only collaborated in determining caseload assignments but to also help families gain access to resources within and outside of the school. Regardless of the individual, the home visitors shared a common goal. One home visitor said: “We always presented ourselves as very positive and nonjudgmental.”

**Determining Caseload Assignments.** In order to determine the best fit for the family, the majority of home visitors in the interviews explained how they determined their caseload assignments. Home visitors were presented with a list of students and many of them had the ability to select the families they wanted to work with. One home visitor shared that many of them choose to work with families they knew or students they already had a connection with. Another said that they were diligent about ensuring that families who needed translators were paired with home visitors who spoke the same language. Further, a home visitor in one district said that they had the ability to not only review the list of students but add to it if they had additional concerns about a student. Throughout this process, each home visitor would track the meetings and communication on spreadsheets. They were able to share this information with the necessary stakeholders to ensure that everyone was on the same page.

#### **Characteristic #4: Home Visitor Must be Fluent in the Home Language**

Throughout LEAP, home visitors were mindful of the language and cultural differences between families and the school. LEAP home visitors found it most successful to consider the primary language of the family and assign a home visitor that spoke that language. During the interviews, several parents shared that they had just arrived in the United States or had moved from other countries within the past several years. Many families shared that they had difficulty speaking

English and some required translators when communicating with the school. Several parents also shared that they did not understand “how things worked” at school and the challenges that their children faced when adapting to school. For example, one parent expressed difficulty navigating the internet to search for assistive programs and educational applications for their child because of their lack of understanding of English. In an interview, they emphasized English as a significant impediment in their ability to be involved in their child’s schooling: “*Yo, como madre, para mí es una gran barrera el tema del inglés...*” (“*For me, as a mother, English is a big barrier.*”). This not only impacted this parent’s ability to provide additional support for their children at home, but hindered their ability to communicate with the school and understand what took place during meetings. In fact, this parent underscored the importance of LEAP home visitor’s ability to translate during PPT meetings: “*Yo veo la ayuda mucho para...traducir y también buscar opciones y/o programas*” (“*I see this help a lot...for translating and in looking for programs and other options*”).

Through the interviews, parents shared their gratitude towards the support they received through the LEAP program, specifically with home visitors that provided translations and built connections with the families’ cultural backgrounds. For example, in an interview with a parent and student, they shared that one of the providers was known for “helping out a lot in the Hispanic community.” Parents also commented on the home visitors’ professionalism and abundance of knowledge as they both translated and advocated for the child during PPT meetings. Another parent said that before LEAP she was “*feeling very alone,*” but after working with the provider she “*hopes that other families like hers can receive the same type of support.*” Finally, parent noted that she was grateful for the access to LEAP, contrasting this opportunity with their experiences in their home country:

*“En mi país no hay esas ayudas; y yo estoy aquí, contenta, porque ustedes [los alumnos] pueden recibir esa ayuda.*

*Allá [Ecuador] es, si pasó el año, pasó y si perdió el año, perdió y no hay quien te apoye” (“In my country, there is not this type of help and I am here, happy, because these students can receive this help. There [Ecuador], it’s like if the year passes, it passes, and if you lose it, you lose it, and there is no one who supports you.”)*

#### **Characteristic #5: Commitment to Establishing Connections with Families**

All home visitors we interviewed agreed that the goal of LEAP was to “*establish connections with families*” and LEAP provided them the structure, support, and coordination to do it. Some home visitors shared that LEAP helped families feel more comfortable reaching out and some even insisted on staying in touch during consecutive years. One home visitor’s description of how they were able to make this connection with a family is particularly striking:

The first visit was the long one; we spent time getting to know them, observing the family dynamic and, trying to be a non-threatening support for families, just straight out saying,

*“We’re here for you. We’re not here to get on your back, to get on your case or anything like that. We’re here to help you. What are your goals? What are some things you want for your child and then for the child? What are some things you hope to achieve through high school?” ...So, the rapport was established pretty quickly, I think. And then we were able to get down to business and make some headway.*

In nearly every case, LEAP home visitors established a connection with families that extended beyond the classroom. For example, one home visitor said,

*Mom’s got a lot on her plate. I stress to her over and over again. The mom has to take care of herself too, because if you’re not doing anything for yourself, you’re no good to your children.*

In this way, after the home visitor has established a connection with the family, a more meaningful relationship can be formed.

### **Characteristic #6: Connections Lead to More Meaningful Relationships**

Because LEAP home visitors were able to get to know families on a personal level, to them, it felt like a success for the families and as well as themselves. One home visitor stated,

*They just love to just sit and talk. Like, it was just amazing to just sit and talk with these families and know that we were there to support them.*

In addition to establishing a connection with families, home visitors also used the visits to assess the needs of the children and caregivers. In all but one of the interviews, home visitors explained how they created lists of students, classified them by absenteeism rates, and detailed other resources and connections they would benefit from. One home visitor explained it like this,

*By going to their house, talking with the families, [we are] engaging the families and finding out what exactly are their needs, and then how can we support them.*

From the perspectives of the families, the connections established with the LEAP providers were significant beyond getting their children to attend school. For example, one parent specifically reported that the LEAP home visitor allowed their children to “see and understand that education is important as a means to get ahead in life...to have a career and continue forward.”

### **Characteristic #7: Home Visitor as Parent / Child Advocate**

LEAP created space for school staff to get to know families and children on a personal and familiar level as the home visitors built empathy and compassion for students and their families. The LEAP home visitors acted not only as liaison between the families and the school, but also as advocates for the students and their educational experience. Several parents shared that through the development of this relationship the LEAP home visitor acted not only as an advocate for the student, but for the parent during meetings. One parent shared that the LEAP home visitor was able to support

them emotionally during a meeting, while also advocating for their child’s academic needs. Further, they explained that the LEAP home visitor helped to encourage the child and act as a mediator inside and outside of the classroom. One parent said,

*[Home Visitor] helped [my] children to be a little bit more outspoken, to communicate better with the teachers. If they felt like they couldn’t do it, they could contact her and she would help mediate that meeting or that email or that conversation with the kids with the teachers or the staff that they needed to talk to.*

In addition, parents shared that the LEAP home visitor became so supportive of their children that they had taken on the role of acting as another parent connected to the school. For instance, one parent reported that the LEAP home visitor immediately got in contact with the school to get everyone on board about ways in which to help their child deal with their struggles adapting to school. In addition, this parent explained that this communication was bilateral, pointing out the frequent check-ins by the LEAP home visitor, detailing their child’s behavior, needs, and successes in school.

### **Characteristic #8: The Result: Parents Become Better Advocates for Their Children**

Because they perceived their LEAP home visitor to be an advocate for themselves and their child(ren) and because many parents, parents often described how they became better at advocating for their child’s success in school. They were more likely to call / text the home visitor on a regular basis, more likely to seek and find answers related to their child’s experience at school, and, of course, more likely to get a response from the school in a timely manner. In addition, the parent then became more effective as a parent in the home. For example, one parent explained,

*I felt like he has been more social and more engaged in his schoolwork. I feel like we’ve been able to kind of like focus more on his academics, where before it was like he’d get home and kind of do*

*whatever he wanted, but (the provider) kind of came here and helped figure out plans as far as like, more of a set schedule.*

Several parents shared that they believed that they had become a better parent because of the LEAP home visitors’ support and mentorship. Many parents shared that their relationship with the home visitor helped them significantly improve their relationship with their child and the overall “quality of life” in their household.

## **Research Question #6: How Did LEAP Participants Perceive the Effectiveness of the Program?**

Our sixth research question asked LEAP participants to reflect on what worked well and what aspects of the project were most challenging. We begin by summarizing the perspectives from the district leaders and then move to the perspective of the home visitors and families.

### **District Leader Perspectives on the Effectiveness of LEAP**

When the responses of the district leaders were analyzed overall, two themes emerged related to particularly effective practices alongside of four themes that represented common challenges.

#### **Effective Practice #1: Collaboration and Opportunity to Learn**

The majority of respondents mentioned that the sharing of experiences across districts was a huge benefit. Some representative responses are listed below,

*I just think that what’s the best thing that I’ve I that I can see from this effort is the sharing of experiences across the state seeing other districts doing this work. I’ve learned a lot from other districts, from people who know their stuff. I think the willingness to make some changes in systemic changes that I think are getting in the way...I think that we can really do a lot, lot better, yes. But I think that this is an opportunity for us as a state to do some real good work in a coordinated way. -DL13*

*One other plus for my team was having conversations with other districts about this work. We’ve had a lot of the conver-*

sations outside of Connecticut actually through our national networks around this work, but this allowed for opportunity to interact, learn from and with throughout the state. -DL12

Others noted, support from the state and the Regional Educational Service Center (RESC) Alliance made it possible for districts to learn from each other. This was particularly valuable for districts who did not have an established home visitor program prior to LEAP, as one district leader describes,

*I think that the connection sessions that the State offered, I think that was valuable because for districts that didn't already have a toe in the water with home visiting it, it definitely helped to hear other like real life home visiting stories and advice from folks that you know are out there, boots on the ground and it was a safe space to ask questions about home visiting. I think that I would definitely recommend that to still be supported having newbies come on board with people who are veterans. -DL6*

### **Effective Practice #2: Support and Flexibility from the State**

In addition to the sharing of information across districts, a second major area of consensus regarding what worked well was districts' appreciation of the fact that the state provided them with the flexibility to use funds in different ways. For some districts, that meant adding bandwidth to their existing programs, often in the form of paying existing employees to perform extra work on nights and weekends,

*I think we appreciated that the LEAP people from the State, you know, liaisons, listened, right? They didn't say, "No, you have to do it this way," which isn't always the case with the State, to be honest with you. So, I appreciated there was listening. I think it's a complicated problem so I appreciate that it wasn't like, "Well, here's what XXX said works" and honestly, XXX wrote their stuff before the pandemic. It worked, sort of again. -DL11*

*So, what we did was augment, if you will, and add bandwidth to our already functioning framework. -DL12*

*What the LEAP funding did was enhance what we were already doing. We had 20 people working full-time for [our] team. But [our] employees were on an 11-month contract. What the LEAP funding did was allow those people to do home visits during the summer, at nights, and on the weekends. -DL8*

*The LEAP fundings also allowed us to bring other people into the fold beyond just the 20. Maybe a paraprofessional in one of the schools was interested in doing home visits during the summer, the evenings, or weekends. That paraprofessional was already connected to families so it allowed them to do this extra work with families to whom they were already connected. In other words, the money was used internally to hire people who were already connected to the families through the school. We didn't bring in anyone from outside who was not already connected to the community. -DL8*

Finally, one district leader provided us with a dramatic story about the importance of this program with regard to how it facilitated communication between the district and its community partner in a way that may ultimately have saved a students' life,

*We had some things where the Community Partner forwarded a concern from a parent, from a kid, a student who didn't want to show the school but told the Community Partner. They told me, "I told the admin the admin met with the family." Next thing you know, they helped the student that was having suicidal thoughts, like those were things that, you know, even if that's one student, that means LEAP worked right there. The states need to get it moving... They need to get through some of that red tape at the State government level and realize that every day that goes by is another student that could be slipping through the cracks. -DL4*

In terms of what was most challenging, the district leaders were overwhelmingly in alignment on two main points. The first was the fact that although they greatly appreciated the influx of resources, the money that was promised to them arrived very late and that impeded their ability to plan and implement the pro-

gram in the ways they would have liked. Second, and perhaps most interestingly, they were highly aligned on their opinions of the importance of sustainability for projects such as this, to the point where some felt it might not even be worth attempting if do not have a plan for prioritizing how you will sustain the intervention because that can cause longer-term damage in the community in terms of eroding community trust.

### **Challenge #1: Late Kick-Off**

One of the things that made LEAP a challenge was that the funding was authorized from the American Rescue Act Funds to help provide immediate relief and funds to support schools in the midst of the global pandemic. Although the CSDE was quick to determine that they were going to set aside a substantial amount of funds for dealing with the problem of chronic absenteeism, the mechanism for logistically get the money out to districts took quite a long time, resulting in a delayed start to the project and a short timeline in which to expend the funds. Several district leaders weighed in as follows,

*...it was like here you have it; you guys can do what you want with it and which is a really cool thing. The problem was that we didn't have an award letter. So, it was kind of like, "You know, get reimbursed and convince my financial administrator later to just let me have the money. I promise we'll give you," That was a tough thing. -DL13*

*The funding to this grant was extremely slow, like the approval process. So, I was told about this in let's say August, if not July. But let's say August, just to them grace period. But in terms of the approval process, it didn't happen till late fall like November, December, we're already almost through the year and I'm like "Are we approved? Are we approved? Are we approved? -DL5*

*I think one of the downfalls or negatives or whatever you wanna call it, is I'm really disappointed in the fact that the new grant is chronically absent, like you can't [move forward] because the funding is [absent], you know -DL11*

One of the challenges of the grant was by the time you knew the money was available – and again I love the grant. I think it's been a great resource – by the time you knew the money was available and then hired the staff to do some of the work, half the year was over. -DL14

Although the verbal commitments were there from the State and the district leaders had no doubt the funding would come, the financial officers would not allow any payments to be made without an award letter. This was a major barrier given that the primary costs associated with the LEAP intervention came from investments in human capital.

My finance director is not going to let me hire five additional people without the money from the State. And I don't blame him for that. So, I think that has been the thing, when you write in a grant that has the ability to bring in some extra resources and human capital and then you can't deliver on that because of, and again, I'm not blaming anyone, it's just red tape, bureaucracy. -DL14

Hire these people. They've left jobs and now things are up in the air. I think the reason we're in a good place in CITY is because I didn't hire everyone, so that gave me a huge chunk of money and salary so I can maintain my staff at the very least till the end of December. After that, I don't know what I'm gonna do. So, I think, I'm hoping and praying, the money's coming... -DL11

So, we're kind of leaning right now towards how we expand and build upon all our existing staff to continue to drive this work because I'm a little bit unsure of when we'll be able to pull the trigger on hiring. And then my final kind of question or comment is, "Will this sustain into another year or will it not?" That would be helpful to know now because if you're talking about hiring new people, if you could say to someone, listen, you'll start in January or February and you're gonna run through June or July of '24 versus '23, that might be a little bit more advantageous. -DL14

While delays may have been understandable in the context of emergency funding, the pattern appears to be repeating itself

for LEAP follow-up funding, known as LEAP 2.0. As one district leader noted, LEAP started last year and then it was supposed to end June 30th. Then they extended it into September 30th, then they extended it again to December 31st. So, what I would tell the state is pick a 12-month vantage point like just pick a longer view, because for the six months is not is not helpful... We're having budget meetings starting now and next month... I can't speak to other districts for us. You know, we are in a position where ESSR funds have definitely been helpful to, you know, supplement our budget needs in our district... So, for example, just to be going through LEAP 2.0 right now and it's gonna be like January or maybe February when we get the funds and then you know you have three or four months if it has to be done by June 30th, not helpful. – DL15

### **Challenge #2: Sustainability is Often More Important than Large Short-Term Funding**

Despite frustrations related to delayed receipt of funding, the district leaders were generally happy about receiving extra support, but they were thoughtful about the consequences. In fact, the vast majority of district leaders interviewed felt that sustainability of any program was far more important than the level of funding as articulated by the following district leaders,

...we were very careful to let anyone that we hired know like this is only for a year. And then when it was extended, we were able to tell them. So, it would almost be helpful to know that the funding was guaranteed for multiple years at whatever funding level it is, that would actually be my preference... When you're talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars, particularly for work like this, we're really talking about human capital to do the work and interventions right. Hiring that number of staff members and then knowing the sustainability of it would have been, I think, more advantageous to our continuous programming – to know that we had these people for three years or money to be given a specific amount and had three years to spend it or something like that. I actually think that would

help with programming. -DL14

This needs to be a long-term commitment, we're not going to just change things overnight. It really needs to be something that districts focus on five years or more if this is going to be a priority where it becomes the norm in the district that students attend school on a regular basis. I'm a little disappointed when it comes to some of the federal dollars that we've been asked to spend in a short period of time. To me, we don't want that quick spending and then anything you put in place goes away quickly and we leave families and students out in the cold without being able to sustain those programs that they rely on. -DL2

You can't say you care about this as a State, as a school system, if you don't invest in it, and invest in people who are focused on this kind of work in areas that need it the most, which is places like where I work. It's a huge barrier and is a huge opportunity. -DL7

I pray that this isn't just the one and done... I would really like to see this sustained over time, over many years. -DL11

### **Challenge #3: Staffing Capacity**

Partially as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, there are major staff shortages in many fields, with education being a sector that has been hit particularly hard. As a result, right now there is a huge staff shortage. The following district leaders noted,

It was difficult to conduct all of the grant activities because of a difficulty in finding people, staff that actually wanted to do it and wanted to give their extra time even if they were going to be compensated for it. So, were there enough funds available from the Grant? Yes. Did we have the means to expend all of those funds? My initial impression is probably not. -DL3

I think the other challenge that we ran into was finding multilingual speakers because we are in a multilingual district. We do have quite a few languages spoken here upwards of near 37, so we really, really wanted to be able to communicate with all families and we did

not want a population or a subgroup to be left out of the ability to home visit because certainly even though we had our target groups, anyone who requested a home visit or wanted a home visit was able to get one. So that was a challenge for us to do that. One of the biggest challenges really honestly with staffing and getting people who are willing also to go in people's homes. -DL7

In terms of staffing, we had much more difficulty at the elementary level with our staff. You know, we had offered for just about anybody who wanted to, especially our social worker and psychologist, and we didn't get near as many elementary home visits. -DL9

So, staff buy-in was a challenge for us. Here in DISTRICT, there are times where people feel it could be unsafe to be in certain neighborhoods, etc., where you really do need to target and work from that and they could be right. Certainly, this was also the time where people were very afraid of COVID. So, the notion of going to someone's home where you have very high COVID rates and occurrences, was not necessarily something people want to do. I really understand. -DL7

Furthermore, the issue of staffing is directly connected to the issue of sustainability mentioned previously. This is particularly true in the case of a home-visit intervention project in which the idea is to hire home visitors who are connected to the community. As two district leaders noted,

Will this sustain into another year or will it not? That would be helpful to know now because if you're talking about hiring new people, if you could say to someone, listen, you'll start in January or February and you're gonna run through June or July of '24 versus '23, that might be a little bit more advantageous. -DL14

...you can't continue to just ask people to take on more and more, just because there's money coming into the district. I think if it's enough money where someone can support a job, a position, or at least someone that can, that can take on that responsibility to lead it, it's doable. -DL2

Finally, another relevant issue with regard to staffing was the potential mismatch between the communities in which the home visit providers were living and the communities in which the students were living, as one district leader explained,

Something important to note is that DISTRICT consists of many Magnet schools. So, the schools draw students from affluent suburbs. 83% of students in DISTRICT schools are Alliance District students and 80% of students are living in poverty. 80% of the students are Black/Latino while 85% of the faculty/staff are White. This sets up a dynamic where the faculty/staff are not having a shared experience of homelife with the students and families. For that reason, they made concerted efforts to make the [engagement team] very diverse so that they could engage families at their level, in their language, where they live. -DL8

#### **Challenge #4: An Unwillingness to Learn from What Worked During COVID**

One of the more interesting insights was articulated by a district leader who noted that school districts and the state seem to be throwing hybrid and remote learning out in favor of going back to in-person learning without fully considering the possibility that hybrid/remote actually might work better for some students. In the rush to leave the pandemic behind, are we failing to take note of certain things that may actually have worked better for some students, this leader pondered.

It took a pandemic to show us that we can do things differently and then now we're saying we got to get kids back at school but that's not incorporating the hybrid learning that we just went through. I think it would just be...we learned so much from that it didn't work for all students, but it worked for some and I just think that if you are asking districts, those of us who don't have, we have limited resources or we're going have limited resources after ESSR leaves that provide like provide training, provide understanding or provide a construct that allows districts to explore. -DL15

## **Home Visitor and Family Perspectives on the Effectiveness of LEAP**

The sixth research question asked, "How did those conducting and those receiving the home visits experience them? What worked well, and what was most challenging? Do they perceive the home-visit-experience to have influenced student success?" Overall, the stakeholders we interviewed at all three levels (administration, home visitors, and families were overwhelmingly supportive of LEAP). In our interviews with district administrators, home visitors, and families the following themes emerged regarding the outcomes of LEAP.

### **Effective Outcome #1: Improved Family-School Relationships**

Throughout LEAP, home visitors were able to develop meaningful relationships with students and families. Within six out of the nine (66%) group interviews, home visitors mentioned the "intangible" successes of LEAP, including relationship building with families. One home visitor stated:

LEAP not only opened the door of attendance, it opened different kinds of doors, you know, to support them in any, any things that they need. So [the families] were open and they were so appreciative.

Another said:

Now they feel comfortable to come to school and ask the teachers anything because we connect with them with the teacher and say, "You know you can always call." Now they don't see the school as an enemy. They see the school as a friendship, like [we] are there to help.

**Schools Gained a Better Understanding of the Home.** The relationship that home visitors created with families extended beyond the classroom and what they had the capacity to do prior to LEAP. Also, 95% of all LEAP home visitors interviewed shared that their participation in LEAP helped them gain a better understanding of the home dynamics. Specifically, home visitors said that going to the homes shaped their perspective and allowed them to see what challenges families were dealing with

outside of school. One home visitor who shared this sentiment said,

*You really get a sense of where these kids are coming from once you step into their home. Everything becomes clear, what they're dealing with, and [then you gain] a little more compassion.*

### **More Supportive vs. Punitive**

**Relationships.** Home visitors also stated that through physically visiting the homes they were able to see students and families in their own environment, which creates an opportunity to know them on a deeper level. The majority of home visitors said that this type of relationship allowed them to be “more responsive” to the needs of the families. One home visitor suggested that through the home visits, they were able to act as a “sounding board” for families as they built a connection with someone from the school who they knew was there to support their child. The types of relationships that were created were unique to the ones that many caregivers had experienced before. One home visitor stated:

*It seems like once they found out it was more informative than punitive, that we weren't coming there to shake our hands and ask them a bunch of questions, that we were there actually to offer them help...they seemed to be appreciative of that.*

In our interview with parents, they also agreed that the LEAP home visitor was paramount in allowing them to have a working relationship with school. Several parents described feeling “invisible” until their home visitor came into their lives. One mother described:

*(before) I felt that the school didn't care if I succeeded or not, you know. So, I've been there. I felt like (teachers) weren't doing what they could to (help our kids be successful). So, you know, that's something that I think is a good idea for you guys to do, to show parents you care. Especially these days, it's very difficult and I know there's a lot of aspects of it unfortunately. It's sad, especially for the kids. So, I think that's nice to see [LEAP staff] trying to help us because it's so simple to accommodate, and are willing and able to come to the houses to help them to deal with issues or what-*

*ever the case may be, to find out what's going on if there's something at home that needs to be dealt with or whatever the case is.*

Another parent agreed,

*Yeah. It can make a difference. Just having one person expose you or makes you feel that you are what you said. There's someone who just cares about you... so many teachers didn't seem to care about your daughter or didn't care to reach out and then having this place with Mr. Home Visitor.*

In interviews with parents, they detailed that the LEAP home visitors were able to provide support as advocates within the school. They built connections with families and then bridged the gaps between parents and the teachers as well as between students and teachers. One parent stated:

*Anything that I had to ask her or anything that I was thinking of or had concerns about, I would reach out and she would reach out and talk to me and say, “hey, I was able to do this but it might not take place until such and such time.” So, it was like we always had an open communication. We're working together and that was one thing that was excellent with (the provider).*

In addition to building a more supportive relationship between school staff and families, parents who were interviewed shared that LEAP allowed them to develop a relationship on a personal level. One parent shared how when the child was sick, the provider checked in on them consistently. Another parent said that when they were dealing with health issues and unable to be as active monitoring the students' progress, the provider was consistently checking their PowerSchool and providing updates to the family. One student also shared how the provider not only worked to motivate her but also her brother. The overall feedback from parents expressed that LEAP allowed providers to take more of a holistic approach towards engaging with families rather than the traditional punitive phone calls home.

### **Effective Outcome #2: Increased Student Attendance**

Through the interviews with home visi-

tors, individuals shared their successes with increasing overall student engagement and connectedness to the school. A few of the home visitors shared that LEAP increased student attendance, so much that they were no longer required to meet with the families. Nearly all of the home visitors in the interviews commented on how student attendance improved. During interviews with parents, several parents commented on how their child's attendance improved with the help and support from the home visitor.

### **Effective Outcome #3: Increased Student Engagement**

LEAP supported student engagement beyond the academic setting and also impacted students' connectedness to the school. One home visitor said:

*Once they found a purpose, getting involved in clubs and sports they just felt much better. There became a higher percentage of them being at school and staying at school.*

Throughout the focus groups, several parents also commented on the changes in their children's engagement before and after LEAP. They noted improvements in their academics and social life as well as their habits such as focus. One parent stated:

*We need more programs like this to get kids to stay focused in school and not get into other things, to help kids in the community. It helps kids stay engaged.*

### **Effective Outcome #4: Increased Student Achievement (Graduation, Matriculation, etc.)**

In 1/3 of the group interview, home visitors shared how LEAP impacted students' ability to graduate. Furthermore, several students were eligible for graduation who otherwise may have not completed their necessary courses. During the LEAP interviews with parents, two suggested that LEAP changed their child's perspective towards college, one going as far as saying that their child would not have passed or graduated if it was not for the support of the LEAP home visitor. One stated how the LEAP home visitor helped the student realize the importance of academics in applying to college. Another parent shared how through the success the child found

working with LEAP, they are now more motivated for college without feeling forced by their parents.

### **Effective Outcome #5: Increased Feelings of Belonging**

In six of the nine (66%) group interviews, LEAP home visitors shared that the program increased students' "feeling of belonging." One home visitor said:

*I think having someone come to your home is another level of care. It shows someone taking an extra step and making another effort to come in and show you that, "hey, you are important. You should come to school; we're here waiting for you."*

During one of the parent interviews, a parent shared that the LEAP home visitor was able to give the child strategies and resources and she overall became "happier in school". The parent also stated that the provider helped the class to better understand the student's situation and this led to her to develop a greater sense of belonging. These relationships increased student engagement by increasing their overall feeling of belonging and acceptance as a member of the school community.

### **Effective Outcome #6: Increased Access to Resources for Families**

LEAP allowed home visitors to better understand the needs of students and families and what additional support they could benefit from. Within five of the nine (55%) interviews, home visitors shared that they learned that families needed additional resources. Such resources ranged from after school programs, summer camp, books, supplies, summer jobs, community services, and access to a food pantry. One home visitor shared that many families whose primary language is Spanish were in need of a translator. They stated:

*[The LEAP home visitor helped with] everything from attendance issues, to helping with the college process, to helping with the FAFSA, to helping find jobs, to helping just bridge the gap from home to school.*

All but one of the interviews shared similar stories about how they were able to "connect families to additional re-

sources," whether they were free or not. One home visitor said they were able to support by helping a mother sign her son up for basketball. Another said that because the school had a partnership with the local library, they were able to set up a child with a children's play program at a discount. Further, home visitors explained how they supported families whose children needed special education or therapeutic services. One stated:

*When I started with him, there were no services in place. He now gets therapy and had his meeting with a home visitor for medication management.*

Another stated that because of LEAP, they were able to work with a student who was undiagnosed and began to receive services through a 504 plan. This shows that, not only did LEAP allow home visitors from the school to better connect with families and understand their needs, but it also allowed them the time, space, and resources to support those needs.

The parents that we interviewed overwhelmingly agreed that their LEAP home visitor assisted them in accessing resources. For example, one parent has a son with special needs, and she described her home visitor assisting her during her son's Planning Placement Team meeting (PPT) by helping her communicate. Understand the decisions that were being made, and helped translate. "She was very reassuring," the parent said. Another parent in an interview shared this sentiment saying that:

*I wasn't aware that there were so many resources in the school that my daughter could use and so many ways that the teachers, social workers, nurse, and principal would all work together to help her find strategies to have a good learning experience.*

Another mother described that her home visitor assisted her with finding permanent housing, as she was living with a cousin in New York, had just arrived in Connecticut and was having difficulty finding affordable housing. Finally, a parent shared that the LEAP home visitor was able to connect her to more support explaining that:

*They were very engaging and very*

*helpful; they gave me a lot of resources. They gave me a lot of information on what's available in the community. So, they were very helpful. I struggled with food, they gave me a lot of resources for food sources, so they were very helpful.*

### **Effective Outcome #7: Increased Expectations of Accountability**

In addition to providing resources to families, the home visitors also had the opportunity to "bridge the relationship between school and home" and at times even between parents and their children. One parent shared that once the LEAP home visitor clarified expectations for attendance and academics, the child became more interested in school. In all but one (88%) group interview with providers, they shared that LEAP helped them to develop "expectations for accountability" for parents. One home visitor explained:

*I see a lot of improvement in the kid and parent attitude towards school. It's different when you go to a house and explain the attendance rule policy because we can explain how [being absent] one day is fine and nothing's gonna happen, but one day a week for that kid and they get behind their school.*

Home visitors also shared that through the home visits they helped both parents and children better understand programs like PowerSchool and other technology, so that they could be better informed and help hold their child accountable.

### **Effective Outcome #8: Greater Gratitude and Appreciation**

Finally, through all of the support with LEAP, home visitors in six of the nine (66%) interviews shared that they received positive responses from students and families. They shared that the students loved to see one of their school staff members in their home. They also shared that families felt supported and were appreciative of not only the home visits, but the follow up phone calls and continued communication. For some families, this was a stark change from having an adversarial / confrontational relationship to school to then having a supportive and respectful one.

In interviews with families, numerous parents shared that LEAP was an overall

excellent program and good experience for the whole family. It was helpful to parents and it opened doors for students. One parent summarized their feelings stating:

*It was definitely beneficial, and that's why we stuck with it. You know, we didn't have to stay with the program, but we chose to stay with it because it's actually a phenomenal program.*

### **LEAP Challenge #1: Resistant Teachers**

In all but one group interview, home visitors openly discussed the barriers they faced with getting the necessary support from other staff members in LEAP. Home visitors shared how buy-in from all staff and administration was necessary in order for the LEAP to be successful. One home visitor shared the struggles that they encountered with teachers in the building stating that:

*There are some teachers who are still thinking we are enabling these families. [They say] "Why do you go to their houses?" "Parents need to send their kids to school, and that's it." [or] "I went to school every day. My parents sent me."*

This shows that while the home visitor was able to build empathy towards families, this is clearly not always expressed by other adults in the building who did not participate in LEAP. Another home visitor added:

*I don't wanna criticize teachers, they're doing what they're supposed to do, but I think about these kids - just being a little more flexible in terms of maybe giving them a little extra time to get something turned in - and they're really only a few [resistant teachers], but we're, we're working on that.*

It is possible that the experiences of home visitors can be shared with other staff members to further ensure that all school personnel are on the same page about how to interact with families and what to expect from students. In one district, a home visitor summarized this sentiment saying:

*We need people that are committed to the same beliefs as the team. And I think our whole team, we're all on the same page here.*

### **LEAP Challenge #2: Resistant Families**

In addition to challenges inside of the school, home visitors in all but one district shared that communication with families was also difficult at times. Because of LEAP, home visitors shared that they gained a better understanding of why parents were unresponsive to school phone calls and seemed resistant in the first place. Some examples included families who were "busy working," or due to a "language barrier," such as families that felt as if they couldn't communicate with the school because every time they called someone would answer in English. Still, home visitors shared that the visits allowed them to improve communication with families overall and understand families' perspectives and situations that were often interpreted as resistance. One home visitor stated:

*By [physically meeting them initially], it made such a big difference. When you were meeting them at that crucial time, versus the phone.*

Another added:

*Knowing that it can be just really difficult just to just get some families on the phone, you know, and just to start there, so yeah, I think to physically visit the home [is essential].*

Overall, although challenging at first, once home visitors were able to make contact with the families, meeting in-person, virtually, or maintaining communication was easier.

Finally, home visitors in seven of the nine (77%) interviews shared their experiences with parents who were resistant to becoming involved in LEAP. One home visitor shared that despite the fact that she worked with a caseload of families all year, many that she had contacted at the beginning of the year still had not responded. Another home visitor said that when they reached out to the family, the mother shared that they weren't interested in the program, however, she then began coming to parent-teacher conferences.

### **LEAP Challenge #3: Fear of Deportation**

Additionally, many home visitors

articulated that parents did not always understand the purpose of them reaching out. One home visitor shared that a family expressed resistance because they were worried that the home visitor would report something happening in their home. Another home visitor shared a story saying:

*[The family is] fearful, they're fearful to come to school, because...they're here illegally, and they're fearful that they might get caught. So, they don't know who to trust. And quite often they feel that they don't want to disclose too much information to the school system or ask for help. Because they're very, very afraid of being taken out of this country.*

Through the LEAP school staff members were able to gain more of an understanding of the complexity behind why parents were feeling disconnected from the school and why many of them were resistant to support. LEAP provided an avenue for school staff to better connect with families on a personal level. One home visitor summarized this feeling saying:

*When they saw that we were there to support, not to judge them just to come and help them achieve their goal, they were very appreciative.*

## **Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

All district leaders and home visitors were asked to comment on lessons learned throughout the process that they would like to share with other districts who were considering adopting this approach. Those lessons have been summarized below into six main points:

### **Lesson #1: Staffing Matters**

District leaders were unanimous in their belief that it was important to involve members of their school community in the home visitations. However, they were divided on their opinions of the utility of using community partners to engage in this work with some viewing the community partners highly favorably and others feeling that it was important that home-visit interventions be staffed exclusively by school personnel.

*From a staffing level, I think having*



your own internal people, and if we can grab a teacher, someone with a relationship, you know, with the kid is more effective. I think districts that went out and just used the money and hired three random new people and said just go on home visits, yes, they may impart information, but I don't think it's detailed. -DL9

The most powerful tool we have as educators is the relationship we have back and forth with the parents like, let's not ever let a text message replace that. What I'm trying to get back to, is when grants like this come in, you have to get people on the ground. You have to get people who aren't afraid of community. You have to get people who can speak other languages. You have to get people who have some cultural sensitivity, cultural awareness, cultural engagement with what's going on, and when you do that, you start understanding why kids don't come to school and you start signaling to families why this is really important. So, I laugh at how everybody wants to improve attendance, but nobody wants to spend any money on it. -DL7

Although almost all leaders agreed about the value of involving school personnel, many were mindful of the extra burden this would place on their staff. Some district leaders had initial ideas about how to use staff to target students that ended up not being as useful as they predicted. For example, one district leader relates the following,

I also pushed towards some of the athletic coaches thinking that that would be a good avenue to get a large number of students who maybe would benefit from having a coach. That proved to be not a wise decision and that led to a shift later in the year. It didn't work because players during the season went to school, they were engaged, and they were connected. It was easy. The question was after the season and I think coaches are very connected to their kids and this is no disrespect to anyone. But there's so many other students that need to have that level of urgency and engagement that are not athletes. So having somebody more globally at the school and/or not connected to the school and rather

the community. -DL4

Indeed, other district leaders liked the ability to take a two-pronged approach to the project in which they could build on existing staff resources, but also supplement them.

I like the two-pronged approach because with any grant funding like this, hiring-in just all new people is a slippery slope. First of all, just to find people in today's world and to train them and to maintain them, that's a challenge in and of itself. But I would certainly think through can additional bodies help you and what are they that you need? But more importantly, look at your existing staff, how can you train them better? How can you provide additional opportunities, maybe additional compensation, those types of things because I think this work was happening before the grant existed. It's been important work in education and it's more important now in the post pandemic world. But I think those extra opportunities allowed us to do more work. -DL14

Furthermore, one crucial element of staffing that was articulated by some district leaders is the fact that representation matters. The reality of the situation is that ethnic and racial identities within the community are incredibly important. By enlisting home-visitors with shared identities that reflect those of their community members, this opens up broader possibilities for communication, as two district leaders pointed out,

I think the other challenge that we ran into was finding multilingual speakers because we are in a multilingual district. We do have quite a few languages spoken here upwards of near 37, so we really, really wanted to be able to communicate with all families and we did not want a population or a subgroup to be left out... However, we do use language lines, so we provided additional training to our non-multilingual teachers so that they could at least use the language line communication. It's a little less personal because it is a translator, however, that was our next best ability to do that. So, I think if we were to do it again, I would really wanna focus-in on trying to find those teachers that are multilingual and say we really

need you like, would you consider this? -DL5

[There is] a family who won't talk to the principal anymore, but will talk to the nurse because there's like a medical side to it. And then we found that there's people who, obviously race is a big deal, they won't talk to a white guy in a suit. They'll talk to someone who identifies the same race as them. And again, for us, we could care less. We don't care who you wanna talk to, it means nothing. But we just want to talk to somebody... -DL7

### **Lesson #2: Commitment to the Model**

The majority of school districts already had some model in place for dealing with chronic absenteeism. Some of those models looked similar to the kind of approach advocated by LEAP whereas others adapted their models in various ways. This report has devoted a considerable amount of attention to outlining the many different ways that districts implemented the LEAP model and the flexibility that was afforded to them to do that. In the end, however, the model does have some philosophical elements that permeate the approach taken by all those who participated. For example, LEAP is not based on a truancy model, but rather on a family engagement model of intervention with the focus being a holistic approach to intervention and a prioritization of the use of community members to engage chronically absent students. As one district leader noted,

If you're recommending it to a district, I think you have to do what we did and say this LEAP model is a good model for districts of how it should do home visits. So regardless of any money, the model itself, I think it's a good model. -DL9

### **Lesson #3: Home Visits Don't Have to Be at Home**

Although LEAP is often described as a home visitation model, district leaders were quick to note that the home visits to families do not necessarily need to take place at their homes. The point is to connect with the families in person. In an amusing anecdote, one district leader showed a true sense of empathy and understanding of power dynamics.

*We have to go slow. And the reality is, sometimes people don't want to go into people's homes; they just don't. And I would say, "OK, the other reality is some families don't want you in their home, you know." And we found that when we went to some homes, and this sense of shame. I'll be honest, I don't want anybody in my house, like to be really be honest... So, I think being respectful of everybody and then offering options... And I think the flexibility of this is really critical. -DL7*

Indeed, one district leader noted that the meetings with families could take place in public spaces and still be quite effective,

*We did use some of our money for, not gift cards, but cards that we could use at the local McDonald's for parents to meet us there, if they did not want us in the home. We had our own little corner at Dunkin' Donuts for meetings. -DL9*

Finally, it was also true that many families truly appreciate the visits to their homes.

*Just wanted to throw in that with the visits that we made; parents really appreciated them. Though this is something important and new, I've been working with the school forever and I've never had anyone reach out. I usually have to reach out from the school. We met with parents in all different situations and with the calls we made to set up meetings, there were slim to no people that didn't want or didn't get on board with having us in their home. They're very welcoming. It was a great experience. -DL9*

#### **Lesson #4: Not Everyone Wants a Visit**

Lesson number four was simple. Not all families want a home visit, but many families do. As one district leader noted,

*What we've found is that some families are just not interested. They have had some families say things like, "I don't want you near my children or my property." And other families have said, "Thank God you're here; we're a hot mess." There are a lot of deeper social issues to push on that confound this work -DL8*

#### **Lesson #5: Invest Time Thinking About How You Will Collect and Report Your Data**

The final point, articulated by two district leaders, emphasized the importance of thinking about how data will be collected and reported out to those who can use it to affect their practices as two district leaders noted,

*Frontload how is the data going to be input, how is it going to be reported so you don't have to deal with that later. -DL10*

*... we called in each individual school: "Here's your chronic absenteeism data. Let's talk about it. What do you know about each one of these kids? Who's following up with what?" ... When some of our schools actually saw the numbers like in writing, it was eye-opening, it was jarring. And so, I think using that data to drive those conversations. I feel like this is like, "Here's your school; here's who's coming to school and here who's not." We also disaggregated that by ESL and Special Ed, by school, free/reduced lunch. So, our high-needs population, and just gave them percentages and that also helped each school to target... And so, I think it also helped to look at what intervention. ...I think lit the fire for the school-based teams to then do the work and then have those opportunities to celebrate success. I also became smarter by the questions that I was asked in those meetings and listening to schools. -DL14*

#### **Lesson #6: More Resources Needed for Families, Especially Non-English Speakers**

During the interviews, home visitors in six of the nine interviews shared their desire for more resources and recommendations for continued support for LEAP. One home visitor shared that additional support for parents could include materials and resources from them to better understand the importance of education. Home visitors shared that one of the reasons that LEAP was so successful was because it created access for Spanish speaking families by building connections with Spanish speaking staff members as an entry point into the school community. During the inter-

views, home visitors shared their success with providing this type of access to families as well as their desire for consistency for home-visits, conferences, and all other types of interviews and meetings with the school. Furthermore, some home visitors shared that families would benefit from additional services such as therapy and counseling. One stated:

*What I kind of struggled with is some parents asking for counseling at school for their kids. And so, I'd come back to school and it's like, okay, yes, they can meet with their guidance counselor, but they couldn't really get counseling if they weren't Special Education students.*

## **Conclusion**

This mixed-methods evaluation analyzed quantitative data from 8,690 students across 15 districts spanning K-12 education, and incorporated qualitative interview data from 108 participating district leaders, home visitors, and families, making it one of the largest and most robust studies of a home visit program ever conducted. The results from this evaluation are consistent with, but also extend on prior literature in this area (e.g., Bierman et al., 2016; St. Pierre & Layzer, 1999). Each participating district in this study was given discretion about how best to implement the LEAP intervention within their own district. The different implementation models adopted by various districts again reflected some consistency with approaches found in previous literature, such as targeting elementary school (Meyer & Mann, 2006; Meyer, et al., 2011), high school (Balkis et al., 2016), and those students at key transition points of their education experience (Bierman et al., 2016).

In contrast to much of the past research on home visit interventions, which has tended to primarily rely on teachers as the home visitors (Cook et al., 2017; Johnson, 2014; Meyer & Mann, 2006; Meyer et al., 2011; Stetson et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2018), none of the LEAP districts relied primarily on teachers. Rather, the LEAP districts used either a multi-disciplinary approach within schools or used a model that involved community partners to assist with the home visits.

The quantitative results from the LEAP evaluation were consistent with recent research by Jordan (2020), who found that students and families who are visited by a teacher at least once during the school year were 21% less likely to have chronically absent children. Although Jordan's study found that the visits were demonstrated to be most effective with the families of elementary school aged children, the LEAP intervention showed the largest effects (~16 percentage point improvement in attendance) for high school students. Nevertheless, the LEAP intervention did show an approximate 10 percentage improvement in attendance for elementary students, which is consistent with research by Cook et al. (2017) who found that student attendance improved significantly for first and second graders by approximately 10% across 40 schools under their Truancy Prevention Program.

The qualitative findings from LEAP were consistent with research by Soule and Curtis (2021) who found that within urban diverse high schools, high school teachers that visited their students' homes were able to gain a better understanding of their students' life at home. Specifically, the teachers improved their understanding of their students' cultures, background, struggles, and fears. Further, our results add to the evidence that suggests home visits benefit families for whom English is not their first language (Jordan, 2020).

Overall, the recent literature on the topic is overwhelmingly supportive of home visit programs outcomes. The findings from the present evaluation are consistent with these perceptions. From the 44 interviews we conducted with families, 100% of the parents argued for LEAP to continue. This is due to the fact that their experiences were universally and unambiguously positive. They stated no challenges with the program; they wouldn't change the program at all, just better promote it, so more parents are aware. One parent stated:

*So [LEAP] was definitely beneficial, and that's why we stuck with it. You know, we didn't have to stay with the program, but we chose to stay with it because it's actually a phenomenal program.*

In addition, it was clear that the overwhelming majority of district leaders felt the same way, as articulated by the following quotes,

*I mean, those are the things that I didn't love, but if somebody said to me "would you want to do it again," I would say 1,000,000% yes just because I do think it's an opportunity to connect with families and engage them in something.* - DL4

*You know, LEAP gave us an opportunity...it kind of took the fight a little bit, from us calling to tell you that your kid wasn't in school to us talking on your front porch and getting a chance to talk to families. Trying to break that barrier between home and school and make more of a community. I'm not a person who's ever gonna say that your attendance strategy should be all about home visiting. I think that that works for some families but it definitely doesn't work for other families. It's another tool to have, and there's a lot of neat benefits in getting our teachers to be in our communities and see where our kids come from and maybe open up their eyes a little bit to some of the barriers and challenges that our kids are getting through every day when they come to our school. So, there's a huge staff piece on this as well that's really, I think, powerful.* -DL7

*We're going to continue to do the work. Without the LEAP grant, the work is Monday through Friday 9am-4pm for 180 school days. With the grant, it is also nights, weekends, and summers. That difference is crucial.* -DL8

*Attendance is not just an input (child is there, not there). We really want the schools to see the idea of attendance as a necessity, it is an equity issue, it is a social justice issue. It is not just whether the child is there or not. Helping the students to see the sense of belonging in the school. You bring the students back, but so what if we don't have that environment. Need a culture of not just inputting the attendance but creating a community of belonging.* -DL10

*This was a Governor and a State department making a bet and for us it has been a really important bet. I just don't think that there are many better ways*

*for parents/student engagement than the LEAP visit.* -DL7

In conclusion, LEAP had several successful outcomes, both quantitative and qualitative, during its first year. Despite facing challenges associated with the rapid implementation of the program, the findings are quite robust in favor of the effectiveness of the home interventions in improving attendance. Indeed, it seems likely that the results may even be attenuated compared to how they would look if the model were fully funded and implemented over a longer period, but further research is required to investigate that question. As many participants noted, the process of engaging students who are chronically absent requires a sustained effort over time and a commitment to funding personnel situated within the relevant communities to do this important work. Based on the results of this evaluation, it is our conclusion that LEAP is a promising model for re-engaging students who are chronically absent and fostering significant improvements in student attendance.

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# Appendix A

**Table 1A:  
LEAP Participating Districts**

District	Share of Students High Need	Prior Academic Performance (SBA_ELA)	Prior Academic Performance (SBA_MATH)	Prior Academic Performance (SAT_ELA)	Prior Academic Performance (SAT_MATH)	Average Attendance 2021-22	Share of students treated
Participated in LEAP							
Waterbury	0.81	2430.38	2412.94	448.24	420.98	0.88	0.07
New Haven	0.77	2441.47	2413.76	458.33	433.45	0.83	0.16
New Britain	0.82	2401.06	2381.71	431.72	411.30	0.86	0.03
New London	0.89	2419.51	2392.96	430.28	422.99	0.88	0.06
Bridgeport	0.79	2418.55	2409.48	426.48	408.06	0.90	0.02
Hartford	0.85	2426.80	2412.11	442.09	426.60	0.85	0.14
East Hartford	0.75	2451.54	2428.43	449.63	434.73	0.91	0.12
Windham	0.81	2437.95	2425.27	437.91	410.45	0.87	0.03
Danbury	0.71	2460.41	2448.73	464.70	443.40	0.91	0.07
Norwich	0.72	2450.97	2436.91	346.67	296.67	0.92	0.15
Torrington	0.71	2478.07	2451.90	469.06	451.61	0.91	0.12
Capital Region Education Council	0.72	2460.39	2434.86	462.15	427.03	0.89	0.04
Meriden	0.82	2477.85	2463.65	460.17	427.52	0.91	0.02
Stamford	0.65	2480.84	2468.58	498.99	485.11	0.90	0.05
Manchester	0.65	2454.68	2438.78	474.77	459.80	0.88	0.12

\*High need is defined as a composite index that includes economically disadvantaged students, English Language Learners, and Students with Disabilities

# Appendix B

**Table 1B:**  
**LEAP Participating Districts Treated Students**

	Bridgeport	CREC	Danbury	East Hartford	Hartford	Manchester	Meriden	New Britain
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Unduplicated number of students visited	193	260	717	556	1883	658	145	194
Total number of visits	288	321	1406	727	2376	1189	402	277
Attendance Rate 2020-21	0.715	0.751	0.832	0.878	0.673	0.845	0.831	0.828
Attendance Rate 2021-22	0.712	0.740	0.759	0.881	0.707	0.874	0.840	0.808
Female	0.534	0.527	0.470	0.460	0.472	0.459	0.393	0.515
Black	0.295	0.273	0.064	0.320	0.268	0.243	0.193	0.103
Hispanic	0.601	0.612	0.642	0.527	0.667	0.432	0.683	0.727
White	0.083	0.042	0.227	0.088	0.031	0.198	0.090	0.129
Asian	0.000	0.019	0.033	0.029	0.015	0.106	0.007	0.000
Other	0.021	0.050	0.033	0.034	0.015	0.018	0.028	0.041
Special Education	0.155	0.262	0.126	0.227	0.256	0.160	0.283	0.186
Free or Reduced Price Lunch Eligible	0.798	0.873	0.590	0.665	0.879	0.731	0.855	0.851
English Learner	0.269	0.146	0.342	0.151	0.281	0.114	0.193	0.206
Prior Academic Performance (SBA_ELA)	2357.456	2377.970	#####	2473.976	2391.536	2364.253	2434.406	2392.829
Prior Academic Performance (SBA_MATH)	2362.820	2372.806	#####	2444.596	2372.436	2372.231	2420.790	2386.871
Prior Academic Performance (SAT_ELA)	372.000	406.667	441.507	377.000	405.263	.	420.000	345.000
Prior Academic Performance (SAT_MATH)	348.000	383.333	423.562	375.000	385.790	.	376.667	375.000
Grade During Treatment (e.g. 8, 9, 10)	6.309	4.861	7.638	6.646	6.789	2.388	6.964	5.984

	New Haven	New London	Norwich	Stamford	Torrington	Waterbury	Windham
	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
Unduplicated number of students visited	2841	136	277	143	390	221	73
Total number of visits	5952	188	371	874	875	362	174
Attendance Rate 2020-21	0.645	0.728	0.913	0.833	0.829	0.785	0.679
Attendance Rate 2021-22	0.721	0.768	0.889	0.617	0.872	0.798	0.649
Female	0.463	0.537	0.520	0.455	0.462	0.452	0.521
Black	0.437	0.110	0.173	0.182	0.031	0.145	0.014
Hispanic	0.468	0.691	0.415	0.650	0.641	0.747	0.877
White	0.056	0.110	0.282	0.140	0.287	0.077	0.082
Asian	0.021	0.015	0.025	0.007	0.005	0.005	0.000
Other	0.017	0.044	0.101	0.021	0.036	0.018	0.027
Special Education	0.246	0.191	0.188	0.259	0.218	0.204	0.233
Free or Reduced Price Lunch Eligible	0.905	0.949	0.650	0.699	0.803	0.846	0.671
English Learner	0.179	0.441	0.199	0.315	0.236	0.321	0.507
Prior Academic Performance (SBA_ELA)	2390.100	2363.123	#####	2419.383	#####	2369.922	2418.222
Prior Academic Performance (SBA_MATH)	2354.577	2350.768	#####	2413.000	#####	2352.542	2405.750
Prior Academic Performance (SAT_ELA)	417.609	400.000	.	380.909	416.316	405.000	460.000
Prior Academic Performance (SAT_MATH)	389.783	450.000	.	421.818	405.263	362.500	412.500
Grade During Treatment (e.g. 8, 9, 10)	7.124	5.205	4.610	8.586	6.984	5.531	9.785





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