

Habitat for Humanity's Impact on Education

Habitat for Humanity partners with families and communities to build simple, energy-efficient and affordable homes. Our family partners are in need of adequate housing, are able to pay an affordable mortgage, and are willing to partner with Habitat for Humanity to build or renovate their home. Our families vary in makeup, but there are usually school-aged children within our family partners. Building a Habitat home is done with the power and dedication of volunteers and the Partner Family's "sweat equity", thus, building a Habitat home builds a connection to the community and to the mission of Habitat for Humanity.

Family Partners become homeowners with interest free mortgages and are tax payers in their communities. Once families move into their homes, they have the opportunity to become involved in the life of the school in their community and their children become active learners in the school. Children who have to move often, live in crowded situations and do not have consistent availability to food and meals tend to have many school absences and/or behavioral issues in school. Habitat works to provide simple, energy-efficient and affordable homes and build strength, stability and self-reliance through shelter.

Stable and affordable housing has a positive effect on children, increases their chance of learning and enhances the classroom learning environment:

- Housing quality helps children to be healthier which leads to better attendance and stronger ability to attend in class.
- Housing stability can lead to an uninterrupted school year and not changing schools mid-year. This also can help children to be less anxious since the home environment is consistent.
- Affordable housing can help stabilize the family budget and allow for monies to be available for other family needs. This provides a more stable environment for children to be able to focus while attending school.

Our family partners have shared many happy stories of their children's success in school once they have moved into their new homes. Feedback we have heard is:

- My child has not been sick all year and hasn't missed a day of school
- My children have been able to join in school activities because we know that we are here for good
- I have been able to help with school and the different activities. I would never have done that if I hadn't experienced being a part of Habitat for Humanity
- My children graduated-I didn't think that we could make that happen
- I have been able to continue with my higher education because I can afford it now

Decent affordable and safe housing should be a right for every child and not a lucky privilege for some. Habitat for Humanity in Vermont is working to make this happen. Affordable and stable housing provides the foundation for children to access education and be successful in school. Please help us continue to build these foundations and homes with families.

Habitat for Humanity, Karen's Story

While building my Habitat home, my kids learned about community and how important it is to contribute when it's possible. Although they weren't always on the build, they did see how many folks turned out to help. When they did come to do help, they did things like picking up stones out of the soon to be yard, caulking, painting and using a hammer and tape measure. They felt like they were building their own home. It was a summer of growth in many ways. The kids finally had their own bedroom which they enjoyed picking out the paint for... No more rental white... they both really enjoyed that part.

As a parent I tried to shelter them from the fact that we were struggling, but I know they knew.

With the kids being 11 and 13 they saw the change in me, which in turn gave them a feeling of security. No more moving ... stability. We would come and clean up after the work crew, walk through the house or sit on the land and talk about how wonderful it will be to have our own home.

This was something I never even dared to dream on...

As adult children now, I hear it more how it relieves them to live their own lives not having to worry about their mom. My daughter graduated Suma Cum Laude from URI, Double Majoring in Education and English and is now finishing up her graduate work through Southern New Hampshire College while teaching middle school at South Royalton.

My boy had more of a struggle with school; happily he has turned around full circle and is finishing up his education in Environmental Science at Humboldt College in California.

I'd like to say they would be doing as well no matter what our living situation was, but I doubt that though.

It has been a long time since the house was built, 13 yrs ago, so it's hard for me to remember all the nuances in my children's behavior and tone of life. I just know they were happier. Each occasion was a first for us: Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthdays, all seemed better if I can say that. Jessica on the first night we lived in the house she took a bath... "in a bathtub never used by anyone else..." I can still see the smile on her face; things like that were continual conversations. Cody with snow up to his ears plowing into the driveway from skiing, saying did they know we could ski home from the ski area when we built our home..?? Gratitude is what we felt. I still feel privileged to pull into our driveway and so do my children.

This house has provided me a way to help my family. I have taken in my brother as he had hit a very hard patch in life...divorce, lost his home, and his health... now he is living with me and getting himself together. My ex, who was a first class daddy, I was able to bring him home with me after he was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer and cared for him until he passed away. A home is a priceless thing which has enabled me to do more for my children and family than I would have ever been able to do and I think my kids are proud of me for that, and that makes me so happy, but would never have been able to do this without our beautiful Habitat home.

I thank you for your efforts and hope some or all of this letter helps you get the point across that with happy secure parents or parent, whichever, makes for happy secure children. And that is a good thing.

Education

Overall

The survey's questions about education elicited notable perceptions of changes resulting from the move into a Habitat home.

Children's education

Parents provided an opinion on their children's grades prior to moving into their Habitat home and an opinion on whether their children's grades had changed since the move.

Among the homeowners with children currently in grades K-12 and/or with children who had graduated from high school, 56 percent feel their children's grades in school improved after the family moved into their Habitat home.

Sixty-four percent feel their children's study habits improved after moving into their Habitat home.

One-third feel their children's school attendance improved after moving into their Habitat home, and two-thirds feel no change occurred.

For [my child], there's better stability in being in one place and a better study schedule has happened.

We really like the school district. My children have a wide range of AP credits for college, take college credits, and the school system is ranked really high out of the whole entire nation, not just the state.

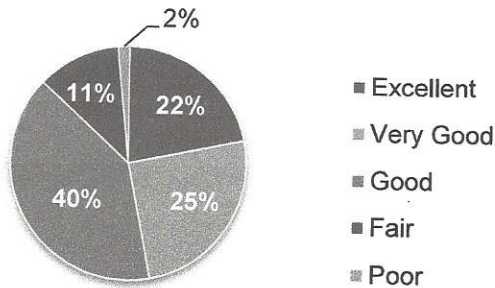
To improve our understanding of changes in children's grades, study habits, and school attendance, we looked separately at those children who did well and children who did not do well prior to moving into Habitat homes (Figures 5, 6, and 7).

Among homeowners who said their children's grades were "poor" before moving into their Habitat home, 100 percent said their children's grades and their study habits were "much better" since moving into their Habitat homes. Additionally, of the homeowners who said their children's grades were "fair" before moving into their home (12%), 81 percent said their children's grades improved, and 70 percent said their study habits improved.

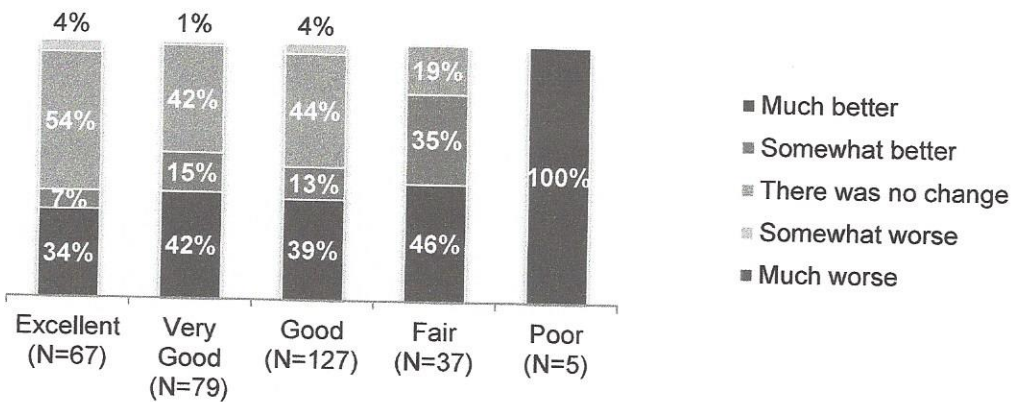
Forty percent of homeowners said their children's grades were "good" before they moved in. A little over half of those respondents said their grades improved (52%), while 44 percent said grades did not change. For study habits, 56 percent said they improved, and 43 percent stayed the same.

Forty-seven percent of homeowners said their children's grades in school, before the move, were already "excellent" or "very good." Even among this group, half said their children's grades improved and 47 percent said grades didn't change. Sixty-nine percent said their study habits improved.

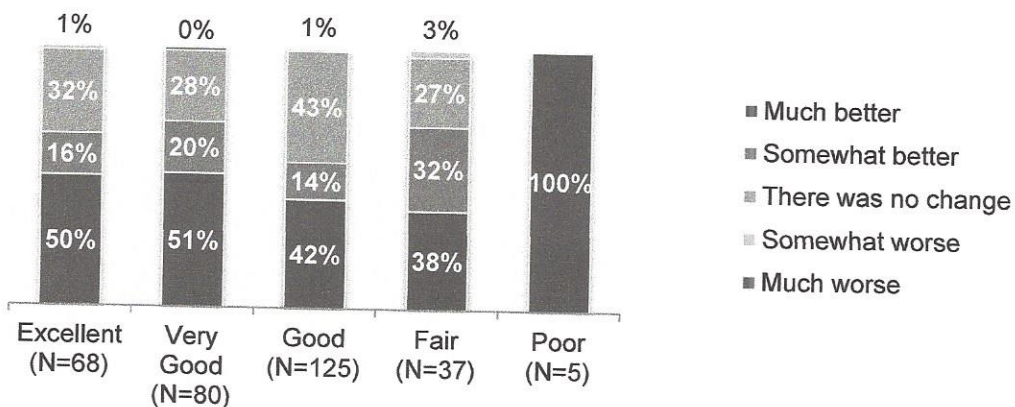
5. Children's grades in school before Habitat (N=322)



6. Children's grades before Habitat and improvement levels (N=315)



7. Children's grades before Habitat and study habit improvement levels (N=315)



From these data, it appears that Habitat homeownership may be associated with improvements in both children's grades and study habits.

Now they have room to study. In the apartment they only had a countertop, and now they have more room to do their homework.

Education to my children- the environment before was so bad and my kids can't go out and were not happy, and now the environment is better so they can go out and be happy and can concentrate on their education.

Additionally, about two-thirds of the homeowners with children feel more confident about their ability to fund their children's college education, since moving into their Habitat home.

Now we pay less money for housing and have a better home. We can use the money saved to save for children's college, buy clothes and food and be more independent.

Overall, 90 percent of homeowners said they feel better about their children's future, 9 percent said no change has occurred, and 1 percent feel worse.

My children are able to complete high school and get their diploma and such. If we didn't own the house, they might not have completed school.

Adult education

Since moving into their Habitat home, one-third of the homeowners started or completed higher education or training programs. Most commonly, this involved enrollment in a community, technical, or four-year college, but participation ranged from GED programs to master's programs and other vocational training. Just under one-third (31%) have plans to continue their education.

[As a] nursing program student, I was very close to giving up and to stop going to school, and take care of my kids first and find a better place for them first, then as time allows me I will go back to school. I was almost going to quit school next semester, but fortunately, [with] Habitat for Humanity, I will not give up on school. They gave me a good chance. That's why I'm still going to school. Since then, I will hopefully be an example of what Habitat is doing to families. I will try to do something good for somebody else that they can't do for themselves -what I learned from Habitat.

I can afford to go back and finish my college degree. I am graduating this year. Because of Habitat for Humanity I am not paying a lot for the house mortgage and so I can go to school.

Half of the homeowners (49%) reported that another adult in their household started or completed higher education or training programs since moving into their Habitat home.

Again, most commonly, this involved enrollment in a community, technical, or four-year college.

Before, I was a college student and I dropped out and my brother was going to drop out of high school so he could work and help pay a mortgage/rent, but now that we have a Habitat house my brother can just concentrate on his education and he's ready to graduate this June 2014!

Combining the information on all adult members of the households of survey respondents indicates that, in 92 percent of the Habitat homes, at least one adult started, completed, or plans to start higher education or training programs after moving in.

Regional

Children's education

The Twin Cities reported the best pre-Habitat grade ratings with 53 percent saying their children's grades were "excellent" or "very good." Among the North and South, about 40 percent say their children's grades were "excellent" or "very good" (Figure 8).

Across regions, the percentage of homeowners who said their children's grades improved varied greatly. The percentage was highest in the Twin Cities at 65 percent, followed by the South with 52 percent, compared to only 39 percent in the North (Figure 9).

In regard to children's study habits, the Twin Cities also had the highest percentage of homeowners who said they improved (75%), compared to the greater Minnesota affiliates (53%).

Forty percent of Twin Cities families reported their children go to school more often since becoming a homeowner, compared to 25 percent of greater Minnesota families, who were more likely to say there was no change to their children's school attendance.

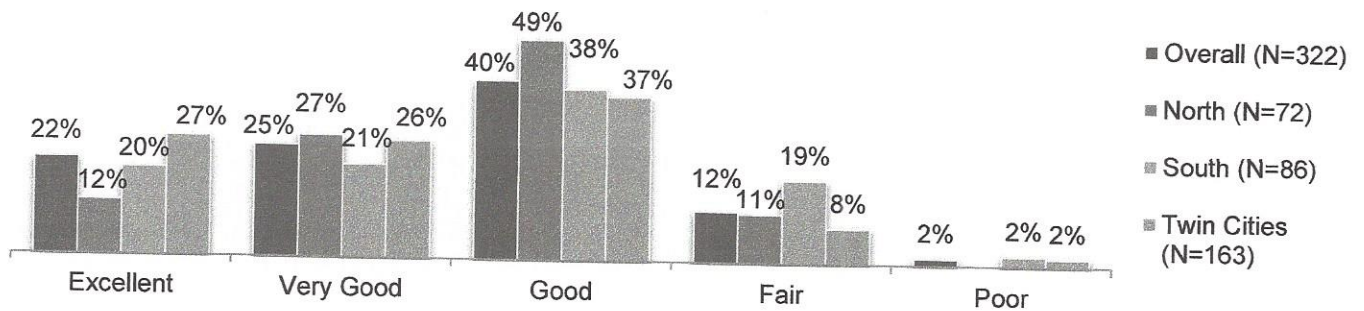
It's helped me raise my kids the way I want to raise them. Before, when I was at my Dad's house, it wasn't my rules and that interfered with how I raised. Now, when I say it's study time its study time!

More families in the Twin Cities reported being confident in their ability to fund their children's college education, with three-quarters (74%) saying they felt more confident compared to 63 percent in the South and 48 percent in the North.

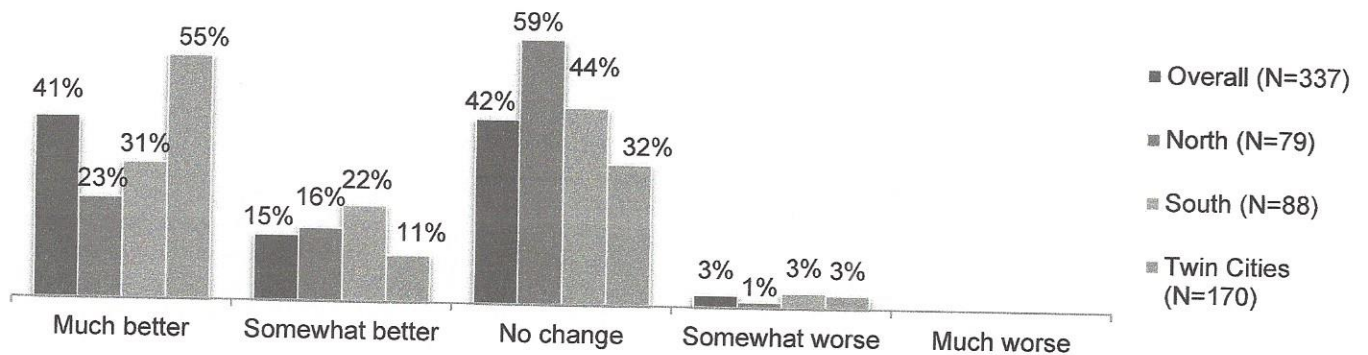
In the future when my kids go to college or university I'm not worried about the mortgage to pay the house.

The percentage of parents who said they feel at least “somewhat better” about their children’s future was relatively similar. However, the percentage of parents who feel “much better” about their children’s future was around 75 percent for the South and the Twin Cities, whereas that number was around 60 percent for the North.

8. Children’s grades before Habitat (N=322)



9. Impact on children’s grades (N=337)



Adult education

The percentage of homeowners who said they have started or completed a higher education or training program since moving into their Habitat home was relatively consistent across regions, although the percentages of homeowners who plan to start a program was higher in the Twin Cities (38%) compared to greater Minnesota affiliates (23%). Most commonly, this involved enrollment in a community, technical, or four-year college. Many people also said they started or completed another form of educational training including things ranging from healthcare or nursing degrees and certifications, to computer or technology skills classes, to English classes.

I am able to go to school and get my bachelor's degree. My kids have their own rooms and they can study in their own rooms.

For other family members starting or completing a higher education program, households in the South had a higher percentage of people who had already started or completed a program (56%) compared to the North (46%) and Twin Cities (51%). In the Twin Cities, 87 percent of homeowners say they have someone in their household either starting or completing a program or planning to start or complete a program. For both of the greater Minnesota regions, this percentage was 79.

In the first place, once I got in the Habitat house, I had a relaxed mind. I could leave my kids and not worry that they'd be harmed. Then I was able to go to college and get my master's. My kids have been able to go to school. We have extra money and live a better life than when we were living in an apartment.

Length of homeownership

When reporting what their children's grades were in school before moving into their Habitat home, percentages were relatively similar across longer- and shorter-term homeowners. However, shorter-term homeowners reported a higher percentage of improvement of children's grades with 63 percent saying their grades were better compared to 51 percent of longer-term homeowners.

Improvement in study habits, school attendance, confidence in funding their children's education, and feelings about their children's future were all relatively similar.

In regard to adult education, over time, more homeowners and family members have started or completed higher education or training programs. For both homeowners and other people in the home, longer-term homeowner families have around double the percentages of shorter-term families who have started or completed a program. For those who plan to start, the relationship is reversed, and shorter-term homeowner families have about double the percentage of longer-term homeowners (Figure 10).

The first thing in the US it is hard for people to find a safe house and an education for your children. I found all that in my Habitat house. They help me with my finances so I can help my husband to go to school.