

HOME VISITS

BENEFITS AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

RESEARCH HAS SHOWN HOME VISITS TO BE VALUABLE

The Positive Effects Of Teacher Home Visits



After a three year study of 14 schools engaging in teacher home visits for students, researchers at the California State University at Sacramento (CSUS) [found evidence](#) that home visits could increase student performance, jumpstart [parent involvement](#), reduce discipline problems and increase overall positive attitudes toward school. If done correctly, home visits provide an opportunity for teachers, parents, and administrators to collaborate.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Home Visits 101

Home visits can be a valuable tool for increasing parents' involvement in their kids' education. Here's how you can get started.

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There's No Place Like Home Visits with Parents

Forge a strong partnership with parents by meeting them on their own turf.

K-12



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Home visits forge school, family links

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From time to time, Education World updates and reposts a previously published article that we think might be of interest to administrators.

Getting to better know students and their families can make parents powerful advocates in their children's education. Home visits can give teachers the insight they need to help all students succeed. Included: Descriptions of successful home visit programs.

MAKE THIS THE START OF...

Home visits can:

- increase student performance,
- jumpstart parent involvement,
- reduce discipline problems and increase overall positive attitudes toward school.

A home visit can give administrators, teachers, parents and students a better opportunity for connection, communication and collaboration.

Reasons for home visits:

- Welfare concern
- Serve papers (truancy court petitions)*
- Truancy investigation
- Family support
- Etc.

*To preserve the relationship between the parents and the school staff we try to have someone from your district office serve these documents.

Other benefits of home visits:

- **Parents stay in their comfort zone.** Meeting in a classroom can be intimidating while talking over the phone can be distancing and impersonal. By having a teacher/administrator travel to the student's house, parents may be more likely to voice their concerns, speak candidly, and let the teacher into their lives. It shows an effort to go out of your way for them.
- **The teacher/administrator learns more about their students.** One of the biggest benefits of home visits are a better understanding of the child's environment and the how that environment might impact the child's learning in the classroom.

Other benefits of home visits continued:

- **Show your dedication to their child's education.** You care enough to come to them. What message do you send when you show up on their door telling them that you noticed they weren't at school on that day?
- **Interaction by choice.** This is a chance to show they are not just another student. You have to make a significant effort to leave a school of 100's of students to check on one.

Know Your Families

One consideration is learning about students' families, their communities and neighborhoods, languages and/or cultural differences, and work schedules. Being culturally responsive when conducting home visits communicates respect while demonstrating genuine interest in their family's rich heritages.

Investigating how others have conducted home visits is important if you want to create a process that is doable, realistic, and beneficial to students and their families.

Conduct home visits safely (circumstances):

- Families may consider your well meaning visit as if you are snooping around.
- Families may be engaged in activity in the home that they don't want visitors to be aware of.
- Families may not appreciate you visiting unannounced.
- Parents might work odd shifts making connecting with them difficult.
- With the housing situation, multiple generations or multiple families may dwell together making privacy more difficult.

Conduct home visits safely (location):

- It is possible that you will go into unfamiliar neighborhoods.
- You may be entering homes in which not all family members welcome your visit.
- You may be entering into apartments or housing developments where you aren't welcome.
- Homes are dangerous places for strangers/visitors:
 - A person's home is their castle whether it's a mansion, condo, apartment, mobile home, motel room, or camping tent.
 - In 2013 it was reported that there are more guns than people in the US. Assume there are weapons in EVERY home.
 - Kitchens are loaded with weapons from frying pans to knives to boiling water.

Preparation for a safe home visit:

- ALWAYS conduct home visits in pairs.
- Always have your district identification (If you use a lanyard make sure it has a breakaway clasp).
- Drive by the home multiple times before visiting if possible at different times of day. (How is the cell service?)
- Have a plan:
 - Is someone going to call and check on you?
 - What if you don't answer your phone?
 - Who is contact, who is cover?
 - What is the purpose of the home visit?
 - Do you have any keywords or hand signals with your partner?
- Inquire with other professionals about the history of the family or residence. SRO's are a great resource for this.
- Use restroom prior to your visit.
- NEVER use the restroom on a home visit. Separates you from your partner and there is only one way in/out.

Day of the home visit, arrival at the home:

- Notify others of your:
 - Location
 - Cell phone number
 - Partner's name
 - Partner's cell phone number
- Timed checks – 5 minutes? Moved to 10 minutes for duration of meeting?
- Look at the residence and talk with your partner about the layout:
 - Where are the bedrooms? (most likely)
 - Where is the kitchen?
 - Is the yard fenced?
 - Is there a gated entry? Which direction does the gate swing?
 - Are there pets?
 - Anything different than other times you have driven by?
- Park your car so you can head out quickly and easily if necessary and will not be blocked in (driveway = bad, street = good)
- Can you quickly access key or fob if needed?
- Lock car door when you park
- **DO NOT** talk about the visit after exiting your vehicle. (There are ears everywhere.)

Entering the home:

- Stand at the door and listen before knocking.
- After you knock, stand back from the door at an angle towards the knob side.
- Use the contact and cover tactic while in the home.
- Sit/stand between the door and the family when possible.
- Be cognizant of which floor you are on and where your egress points are.
- Survey your surroundings:
 - Who is present, what is there demeanor?
 - Notice any Alcohol/drug use items
 - Beer cans/ alcohol bottles, pipes, baggies, syringes, scales, foil, lighters etc.
 - Observe for weapons:
 - Guns, knives, baseball bats, swords, etc



Considerations for rural communities/rural locations:

For rural properties:

Work with Law Enforcement as much as possible. While things are more “rural”, your community is probably much smaller also and people know each other. Do you know their neighbors? Without divulging sensitive information about your case, curiosity, or investigation, what can you learn from them about the family you are trying to visit?

Who are their neighbors? I did an investigation into a guy once only to learn right before we knocked on doors that the house next door was his brother. Almost a huge mistake. We have a county GIS system which tells us who owns the property and shows us the property lines. This could show you who the landlord was as another possible source of information about the family although as with any investigation you have to be careful how you are asking questions and from whom.

Do you know people who have visited the location? A Ferrier, Vet, Police, CPS, Court folks, contractor, mechanic? I should be clear that I’m not asking you to ask around to find any of these people, but hopefully helping you think outside your box of school people to think of others who may be working with the family, and then what casual conversation can you have and what are their impressions of them.

We have some North County families who have worked hard to earn their reputations (at least it feels that way). They carefully guard their privacy and liberties. Most folks know who they are and what they are about. Every county has them. Give these the respect they are due, but also treat them how they want to be treated. They clearly don’t want drop ins.

Considerations for rural communities/rural locations (Cont):

Are there no trespassing signs? If so, how many? If there are a LOT of signs (the kind that make it unmistakable that they don't want company, I would always try to call first and arrange a time for the visit.

Do you see surveillance cameras? (None of this is meant to dictate your duty or assignment to do a home visit, but it helps you prepare.)

Google Earth: Have you looked up the property so you have an idea what to expect at the end of the driveway?

When you drive down the driveway the minimum you can do is back on arrival. Have your vehicle already pointed out to leave. I advocate for this all the time though. Imagine how smoothly release would be in a school parking lot if parents all backed in when they arrived 1 at a time. Read the attachment for more on that.

Maybe 2 people isn't enough and you take 3 people (so you can all stop by homes of kiddos). You can ask someone to stay by the car so you don't outnumber and create an awkward imbalance between school people and parents. If they chose to wait IN the car, have them roll the window down a little and refrain from listening to the radio so they could hear the slightest sound of distress. Similarly they could beep the horn if other family members arrived, so you knew to expect someone. You could work out whatever SOP's you felt made it safe and then use the same tactics at each home. If anyone is offended by how you safely conduct a home visit, you can tell them why you do them the way you do and confidently tell them that you do ALL the visits the same way.

Considerations for rural communities/rural locations (Cont):

If possible take a vehicle that has school markings on it. Maybe ESD has something you can use to show you aren't a detective, or CPS etc.

Stop by the homes of several students in the area, not just the home of the student you are concerned about. That way you can say you are in the area checking on students and it's true. Also you can get a feeling home the "farm" or home may look down the end of that driveway. You can also share "I'm going to XXX next. I have been to XX and XX and XX." This isn't personal informational, it's tactical and factual. Neighbors talk to one another, word gets out.

This kind of living might tip their hand to something you can reach common ground on. Do they raise sheep, horses, cows, wheat, corn, hay, etc.? What do you know or not know about that topic? You might find a couple ideas for conversation when thinking about the history, or industry of that crop or animal husbandry.

Everyone definitely has a gun. They just do when they live in the stix.

Questions?

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