
Sample Home Visit (Narrative Description)

Note: This is not an exemplar, only an example!

Context:

Apartment Complex. The apartment is 2 stories. In the doorway, there is a rack with dozens of pairs of shoes on it. On the stairs leading up to the bedrooms and bathroom, there is a stuffed animal on each stair. There is a glass sliding door out to a small patio full of plants, and the apartment is dimly lit. There is the faint odor of cooked food, some sort of oil and meat.

Participants:

Classroom Teacher (CT)—5th grade, new to the school this year (but not new to teaching)

Reading Specialist (RS)—At the school since 2001

The family recently immigrated from east Africa. The parents look like they're in their late 20s or early 30s.

Child is sturdy but not large, and he is serious.

Sibling is a 19-month-old girl. She is in a flowered, sleeveless onesie and shoes for very early walkers. Her hair is beaded, and she has remarkably fine motor control. She is also sure on her feet. She does not talk, chatter, or cry at all during the visit.

Events:

The CT, RS, and researcher descend to the lower level of the building within the large apartment complex and knock on the door. The father opens the door and greets the visitors warmly, shaking everyone's hand. The CT asks if the visitors should remove their shoes. He then sees the shoes in the entryway and proceeds to take his off. The boy appears behind the father. The boy, who is holding a library book, goes and sits on one of the overstuffed chairs that backs up against the glass sliding door. The father sits on a couch that's perpendicular, and the RS and CT sit on the couch that completes the U of seating around a large, flat-screen tv. There are pictures of the family on the wall across from the couch, and toys in bins around the room. In the corner is a glass coffee table with a digital picture frame on it.

RS to C: "So, what are you reading?"

C: "It's (name of book). I got it from the school library."

RS: "That's the book I'm just about to read! How is it?"

C: "It's pretty good. The name doesn't have anything to do with the story, though. It's about a boy in a new place. I like it so far."

RS: "Great! I'm looking forward to reading it next week!"

The CT then explains to the father that they're there to say hello and share some information about the class. He hands the father the Back to School Night (BTSN) flyer and reiterates that BTSN is the next week. "My wife will be there," responds the father, as he sits the toddler on his lap. The CT hands the boy the goldfish crackers and pencils from the bag he's brought along. The toddler squirms away from the father and grabs a walker toy, walking purposefully around the room with it as it clicks and whirls. Everyone watches her, smiling. There is the sound of creaking floorboards upstairs, and then the mother descends the stairs. Everyone stands to say hello—the CT shakes her hand. She sits in the overstuffed chair between the TV and the child. While she does not talk throughout the conference (and no one translates for her at any point), she remains engaged through eye contact and the occasional chuckle. It is impossible to know if and how much of the discussion she is following. The toddler eventually climbs up on the chair with the 5th grader, eats a few of the goldfish crackers he hands her, and finds the TV remote. She turns on Paw Patrol, and it remains on for the duration of the meeting.

The CT asks the father what questions he has about 5th grade. He asks how the teachers are going to prepare the children for middle school. The boy chimes in: "I've heard some of the teachers are mean. And if you

don't pass your (SOL) tests, you don't get to do all of the fun activities. I really want to be able to do the afterschool activities, not extra work."

The CT says, "Yeah, some of the classes at (middle school) everyone takes, and some of them are choices for the kids. When we get nearer to the end of the year, some people—like (school counselor)--will come to talk about the transition. Lots of families have questions about that. I'm new—well, not new to teaching, but new to school—so I'm learning about this stuff, too."

The father expresses that he hopes the school will really get the children ready for how middle school is going to be different, and the RS chimes in that she's heard that the 6th grade teachers work really hard to support the students.

The toddler is now balanced on the mother's feet, and the mother is moving her up and down. The mother is closest to the TV, and the toddler is focused on the screen. The CT asks the child what his hopes and dreams are for 5th grade. "I want to learn more English, so I can pass the test," he responds. The RS remarks that the child goes to the ESOL teacher, and he's doing really well with his English. The researcher asks which other language he speaks, and he responds, "Swahili."

The CT asks the child who his closest friends are in 5th grade. He names 3 boys, including the boy who the team has just visited. The CT remarks on that, and also on how those children are grouped together for the film festival project. The child corrects the CT—only a few of them are together—and then asks why the film can only be 2 minutes. He seems frustrated/disappointed by this restriction. The CT responds that it requires that the students be concise, but it's also about fairness, so there's an opportunity for everyone to screen their films. The CT then addresses the father: "The film festival will be at UVA in November. We hope you can come."

The CT asks if the child has any other questions about 5th grade. The child asks when the DC trip is going to be. The CT responds that it is in the spring, and they'll go to the zoo. "But DC is 2 hours away!" remarks the child.

CT: "Yes, it will be a long day that day."

Child: "We went to the zoo this summer."

CT: "In DC?"

Child: "Yes. It was so hot. So so hot."

RS: "Did you see the gorillas? I remember being there and the gorillas were moving from one cage—area—to another, and they were just right there, swinging on big ropes right above our heads. They were so big!"

Child: "We had to walk so much. All the way down."

RS: "And then all the way back up again. I know. It's a lot of walking"

Child: "Yeah. And so hot. But the food was really good."

CT: "We'll get more information about that trip later in the year."

Child: "We also went to the Natural Bridge (State Park) this summer."

RS: "Wow—you were all over the place this summer! I went camping with my family, and we didn't realize until we were there that Natural Bridge was right there!"

CT: "Well, I think we're going to go visit another family now. Thank you for having us."

Father: "Thank you for coming."

Everyone walks to the door and puts shoes back on. There are no handshakes, just smiles on the way out.

CT: "See you on Monday, (child)!"

The father closes the door as the visitors ascend the steps to the parking lot.