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# Teacher Home Visit Project—A Model for Home Visits

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## Benefits and Purposes of Home Visits

- Breaking down barriers and misconceptions (possibly implicit biases)
  - Urban schools—teachers often do not live and work in communities where they teach
- Allaying suspicions of teachers by families
- Empowering parents
  - Turns the table—the teachers are the outsiders now
  - Parents shift to seeing themselves as assets rather than outsiders—valued players in their children’s education
- Broadening teachers’ ideas of parent involvement
- Teachers and parents supporting each other’s efforts

## Must Do’s [non-negotiables from the standpoint of the THVP]

- Participation is voluntary [teachers, staff members, families]
- Teachers and staff members are trained/compensated [*Title I parent engagement mandate*; foundation funding for seed money]
- Goal of the visit is relationship-building
  - Not about attendance or struggles in school
  - Build a relationship with the families. Positive; supportive.
  - No paperwork!! [CPS, police write notes. Families may be wary of note-taking by outsiders] Take any notes afterward
- Visit in pairs [liability/safety, translator, one active listener and one person taking the lead; both ought to be trained, but sometimes an apprentice model; reflect together afterward]
- NOT targeted at low-performing students or those with behavior challenges—visit everyone [long-lasting, sustainable, edifying]



Source: [pthvp.org/PTHVworks](http://pthvp.org/PTHVworks)

## The Visit:

### ➤ Beforehand

- Phone call to set the appointment “I’m \_\_\_\_’s teacher. Would like to come visit. I am a better teacher when I know families. May I come by?”
  - who am I, what’s the purpose, who’s coming with me, how long will I be there, make it clear that you are not targeting certain students
  - stay positive and allow for options in addition to meeting in the home (like a nearby park or community center; attending the child’s activity)
  - Suggest times, set a date and time, say that you’ll call the day before to confirm (and then make sure that you do!)

### ➤ During—Listening and Learning

- Introductions and purpose of the visit (to build the relationship and learn from the family—not about academics, per se)
- Ask open-ended questions (e.g. What does the family do for fun? What was schooling like for the parents? What are some family traditions? . . .)
- What questions do you have for me?
- How best to contact this year (in both directions)?
- Invitation to an upcoming event at the school or in the classroom

### ❖ Barriers

- language
  - There are generally linguistic brokers in families—ask if there is. Try not to use the student him/herself. InterpretTalk or Google Translate can help.
- fears
  - personal safety
  - >20 years, many many thousands of visits → never had someone harmed
  - if you’re freaked out, gracefully bow out and reschedule in a neutral location
  - mandated reporting of danger to child—family is asking for help! [you’ve called and asked, you’ve confirmed, they’ve invited you in]
  - dogs, smoke, tv
  - FEAR FROM PARENTS: You are coming to take their children away.
- cultural barriers
  - nothing teaches more than going to sit in someone’s living room and having a conversation
- assumptions
  - schools and families often make judgments that are deep [race, SES, and gender] and **negative**; rarely get challenged