

# Two-Way Communication for Teachers



## HOME VISITS

### Home Visits: The Rationale

Families have the most direct and lasting impact on students' learning and development of social competence. It is critical that schools engage families in the formative assessment process. When families are involved in this ongoing process, schools gain information that helps students to achieve more, exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior, and feel more comfortable in new settings. At the start of the year, teachers must reach out to families in order to build the kind of relationships that engage them as active partners in their children's early education.

### The Benefits of Home Visits

Home visits have been associated with higher scores for students in math, reading and adapting to the classroom. Students who receive home-visits are also found to have greater engagement in literacy activities and are more likely to choose and participate in group activities.

### Home Visits: An Introduction

Home visits can serve as the foundation of formative assessment. The first goal of home visits is for educators to listen -- to build relationships and trust, not solve a problem or demonstrate expertise. Home visits are based on a belief that families and teachers are equally important co-educators and that the family is the expert on the individual child while the teacher is the expert on the curriculum instruction and assessment process.

The home visit is an opportunity to effectively engage family members in their child's learning and

This resource can be used to understand how to build relationships and trust with families through home visits. This resource includes readings, templates, and Questions and Answers that support teachers in planning for home visits.

#### Recommendations

- Implementation Settings
  - Planned individual time
  - Teacher collaboratives
  - Professional learning communities
  - Professional development days

**Planning Time:** 60 minutes planning for home visit

**Implementation Time:** 60 minutes for home visit

**Families** can use this resource to prepare for home visits with teachers. (Teachers should provide this resource to families).

**Principals** can distribute this resource to teachers, as well as develop policies to ensure that teachers have the opportunity to complete home visits.

**District leaders** can use this resource to develop policies that support school enactment of home visits.

development. It is important to have the following goals and intentions:

- Establish a positive relationship
- Learn more about the family and the child
- Use information to inform teaching and learning

In addition, home visits are:

- For relationship-building and co-planning
- For building awareness around cultural beliefs and norms
- Not conducted on school grounds
- Voluntary for teachers and parents
- Not just for struggling students
- Scheduled in advance

### Home Visits Benefit Educators, Too.

Teachers gain insight on the home environment of their students, as well as the strengths or 'funds of knowledge' of students' families, which allow them to make differentiated instruction more individualized for every child.

## Home Visits Are Proven To Create Strong Relationships With Families and Have the Most Impact On Student Achievement Moving Forward.

Home visits lead to improved communication with parents, enhanced understanding of the student and family, and greater insight on how the home environment can support school performance.

### Home Visit Planning Document

Timeline	Tasks
<i>Before the home visit</i>	Organize contact information.
	Compile a working list of family phone numbers, addresses, and emails.
	Develop a strategy/timeline for visits ( <i>ex: going in alphabetical order, picking specific days/times for visits</i> ).
	Make initial contact and use the HOME VISIT SCRIPT as needed to guide the communication.
	Send information home to families like LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR CHILD and HOME VISIT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.
<i>During the home visit</i>	Reintroduce yourself (and anyone else who is with you).
	Ask questions to break the ice. ( <i>Ex: "Are these _____'s siblings?" "How long have you lived here?" "Who enjoys video games?" etc.</i> ).
	Restate the purpose/focus of your visit. ( <i>Ex: "My reason for being here is just to spend a little time getting to know you better and hearing from you about how I can best support your family and your child. I mostly just want to listen, but I will also be happy to answer any questions you have for me."</i> This means you cannot be asking the bulk of the questions.)
	Ask one general question first. ( <i>Ex: "What are things that have worked/not worked about your child's past education experiences?" "What are your hopes and dreams for your child this year/in the future?" "Is there anything that you want me to know about your child that you think will help me in helping him be successful?"</i> ) Invite questions by asking what the family member would like to know about what's happening in the classroom.
	Listen. ( <i>Give the parent/family member time and space to answer your questions; continue to ask open-ended probing questions if the conversation does not flow naturally; allow silence; resist the temptation to be the authority in the conversation; if taking notes, be clear that you're writing down goals.</i> )
	Share your expectations. Encourage the parent/guardian to share their expectations as well.
	Offer an invitation. ( <i>Take this time to personally invite the family members to upcoming school events, classroom activities, and volunteer opportunities.</i> )
<i>After the home visit</i>	Fill out the Home Visit Debrief Form.
	Follow-up. ( <i>Ex: Tell the family member about the many ways you plan to encourage communication and give them specific ways to contact you if anything comes up and they want to talk to you. Ask them what method works best for them.</i> )
	Continue communication consistently. ( <i>Using their preferred mode of communication, set up periodic informal check-ins, ask families about goal progress at home.</i> )
	Track goals in the classroom and share progress. ( <i>Have a system for tracking and sharing updates with families in clear, concise ways.</i> )
	Be open and available to more visits or out-of-school convenings. ( <i>If the opportunities align, be clear that it's possible to meet again based on the need and purpose.</i> )

## FAMILIES' FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HOME VISITS

### **Q: Do I Have to Allow the Teacher To Visit My Home?**

**A:** No, the home visit is voluntary. Your child's teacher will contact you to find out if you're comfortable letting him/her visit your home. Alternative locations include local community centers, libraries, or coffee shops.

### **Q: Why Is The Teacher Coming To Visit My Home?**

**A:** Because you know your child better than anyone else, the teacher hopes to take some time to hear what you expect from him/her as your child's teacher, and to learn about what your hopes are for your child. The teacher's hope is to build a successful relationship between school and home life that will help your child succeed. As a result of home visits and strong school-home relationships, a child's academic progress usually increases.

### **Q: What Should We Discuss During The Home Visit?**

**A:** Talk about the things your child does at home and how they may relate to what they do in school. Remember, this is a learning experience for both you and the teacher, and not a time to troubleshoot something that may be wrong in the classroom.

### **Q: What Is the Teacher Looking For During The Home Visit?**

**A:** The teacher is just looking to get to know you and your family better. The purpose of the visit will be simply to listen to you and learn from you. For example, the teacher might ask about your child's favorite books, toys, or games. He/she will also be happy to answer any questions you have.

### **Q: Is the Teacher Visiting Because My Child Did Something Wrong?**

**A:** No. Home visits are not just for struggling students. The teacher wants to get to know all of her/his students better. He/she wants to hear from you about your child's needs, likes/dislikes, and strengths and challenges.

### **Q: Should I Do Something Different to My Home To Prepare for The Visit?**

**A:** No, you don't have to do anything to prepare for the visit. You don't need to worry about cleaning or changing anything in your home. Your child's teacher will not be there to judge your home; he/she just wants to get to know your child and family better.

### **Q: Should My Child(Ren) Be Present During The Home Visit?**

**A:** It's not required that your children be there, but it is helpful for the teacher to see your child in their natural home setting.

# Let's Talk About My Child

No one knows your child better than you. Through conversations with your child's teacher you can share important information that can help your child's teacher understand him/her better, and find out more about your child's progress in school. Here are suggestions for getting the conversation started...

Ask the teacher what your child is learning at school.

Share some of your child's favorite things to do at home.

Tell the teacher about things that your child can do easily or really well.

Share information about your child's temperament.

Share information about things that are difficult for your child to do or learn.

Ask about changes he/she sees in your child as the year goes on.

Ask what you can do to support your child's learning at home.

Ask about how your child gets along with other children and adults at school, and tell the teacher about how your child gets along with friends and family at home.



# Home Visit Introduction Script

## LETTER/EMAIL/PHONE CALL EXAMPLE

Greetings,

I hope this note finds you well! I just wanted to let you know what a pleasure it is to have \_\_\_\_\_ in class. In an effort to learn more about your goals for your child, I am writing to ask whether you would be comfortable letting me visit you and \_\_\_\_\_ in your home. The visit does not have to be long; I just want to talk together – perhaps read a book with \_\_\_\_\_, look at \_\_\_\_\_ favorite toy, and have a chance to talk with you and your family. I have found that this home visit really helps to connect family and school, and as a result, a child’s academic progress usually increases. Below I have provided some available times. Please choose a time (*or suggest others if none of these work*) and send this sheet back with \_\_\_\_\_. I will contact you to confirm soon. If you would rather meet at a location outside of your home, please let me know what would work for you and we’ll come up with a plan.

Warmly,

\_\_\_\_\_

Mondays 7:00 AM - 8:30 AM and 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Tuesdays 3:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Wednesdays 7:00 AM - 8:30 AM and 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Thursdays 3:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Friday 3:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Some Saturdays Anytime

Some Sundays Anytime

**Time(s) that work(s) for you:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Home Visit Debrief Form

### **THIS FORM IS TO BE FILLED OUT AFTER THE VISIT, NOT DURING.**

TEACHERS SHOULD CONSIDER NOT TAKING NOTES DURING A HOME VISIT IN ORDER TO FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING.

Teacher name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_

People present at visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Family's hopes and dreams for their child: \_\_\_\_\_

What did you learn about the student or his/her interests that will help you in teaching him or her?

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Any information on family's past education experiences:

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