Testimony

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Before the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project, I was very close-minded to the school, very negative. When I was a student at Oak Ridge, the teachers there were very unsupportive of the needs of myself and other students. In my case, I felt like I was discriminated against because of my economic background. So when I went in to Oak Ridge with my kids for them to start their education, I already had a barrier to the school and wanted to protect my kids from that kind of negativity. The principal and the assistant principal there made a point to try and build a relationship with me, even though I was always negative towards them and kind of stand-offish. No way would I agree to a home visit from a teacher. But then my daughter struggled, and they took this opportunity to kind of woo me into doing the first visit.

On the visit, the teacher asked me, and I’ll never forget this, she said “What are your hopes and dreams for your child.” And I knew that if anybody was going to come into my home, in a nonjudgmental way, and ask me that question, that they really cared. So from then on out I just began to let that barrier drop. Anything I can do to help, and support and be a part of, I’ve been dedicated to the school.

The home visit program definitely has given parents like myself a voice. I feel a lot more confidence to voice what I feel is best for my child’s education, and I also feel like when I voice that opinion that I’m actually going to be heard and my child’s educational needs will be supported.

For my kids personally, they are both reading much better. My children are both English language learners - when they started school they didn’t speak any English. By the end of kindergarten, my oldest still didn’t know much English, and that was scary for me. After my first home visit, in first grade, we got the help she needed and she was reading at grade level by the end of the year.

Not just us but also with other children, one of the biggest supports of that is combining the home visits with Academic Parent Teacher Teams, because a lot of parents like me don’t know how to help their children with subjects they are struggling in.

The home visit project has definitely built a relationship between myself and the school, and it’s grown into a community thing. It’s not just building relationships between the teacher and home, but also building relationships parent to parent, in the community, and I think that’s pretty cool.

I think it helps teachers see that a lot of times we are just misunderstood parents. And for parents, they see there are teachers out there that really do care about the education of our children, and not just there to collect a paycheck, which is what I used to believe. Now I know that’s not like that. I hope more schools do PTHVP. It can really shape the future for this generation of children.