Families are the very best partners in education. Our teachers have done thousands of home visits with their students’ families, and I’ve held scores of meetings with parents everywhere from their PTA meetings and living rooms to our local Costco. Through these experiences, I can say that families are the very best partners in their children’s education. However, I’ve also learned that parents can be good partners only if you give them the tools they need to engage.

Our home visits give teachers a chance to learn about individual students’ needs and interests at the start of the school year so teachers and families can work together to help those children succeed. At our community meetings, we provide parents with key information but also let them know the issues that need their feedback. We use this feedback every year when we formulate our budget, and we focus on families when we have to make decisions about opening new schools, consolidating schools, or changing school boundaries. I have found that even the busiest families will gladly make time for you when you seek their input.

Kaya Henderson, Chancellor, Washington DC Public Schools