Testimony

March 14, 2016

Christean Ralph, Kindergarten Teacher
Jena Anderson, Title I Teacher
Warren Elementary, Helena, MT, a high poverty school with 52% free and reduced lunch

As partners, they visit all of the kids in Chris’s room. They are white, middle class women.

“We teach in a high poverty school and that’s been a real eye opener for me.” Jena

“We had absolutely no preparation for the differences in race, ethnicity, class, any of that, in our credential program. And it’s really too bad, because now, we look back, and I guess through our experiences with home visits, that has been more powerful for us than anything we got in our teacher training.” – Jena

“Understanding that my expectations, like a child is going to come to school fed, because that’s what my class does, understanding that just because that’s how my family works doesn’t mean that’s how their family works. You know, why they don’t bring the dollar for the project that we’re doing. My class would say gosh let’s turn that in tomorrow, right away, well, they’re not. Home visits helped me to connect with families better than I had.” – Chris

“Together we have conducted over 300 Home Visits to our Kindergarten Families. We have connected with many families creating a solid relationship between families and school. We, parents and teacher, truly believe we are partners in the growth and education of their child. This project has changed the way we teach the kids. We have a deeper connection to the family and the student, allowing us to better teach the child. For some of our families, we have opened the door for them to again trust the school system.”

“The Home Visits have helped us to challenge our assumptions that we as middle class people hold about others. One particular story of this is about a little boy we went to go meet at his trailer. When we arrived at the trailer, we both felt sadness for the little boy. Just by looking at the condition of the trailer, we assumed this boy had a sad, horrible and disadvantaged life. When we climbed the rickety stairs to the trailer, the door burst open and out came “the masses.” There were many adults who immediately began hugging and welcoming us. We were then taken around the back of the trailer to see the bunny hutch they built. When we went inside the trailer, it became apparent to us that this boy had more support, love and stability than many of the students we have had in the past. This family cared so very much for him. They were so very proud of him and offered him the utmost support. At the end of the visit, the 22 year old brother even chased down a chicken for us to pet. We went away disappointed in ourselves for originally thinking the worst for him.”