

Parent Teacher Home Visits and Early Childhood

Across the country, many agencies that serve new and expectant parents use home visits as a way to provide critical supports to young families. Research has shown the lasting contribution such visits make to child development, family stability, and preventing abuse and neglect. While home visiting has long been a practice within various programs, such as Head Start, it has not spread to the larger field of early childhood education. Several models of early childhood home visiting exist including the Nurse Family Partnership, Early Head Start and Parents as Teachers.

A Relational Approach to Home Visits

Parent Teacher Home Visits (PTHV) is a growing practice in public schools across the preK-12 grades. PTHV trains educators in how to conduct relational home visits that build a partnership between the teacher and the family and to create positive school climate. Across the US, an increasing number of communities are using PTHV for early childhood, pre-school and transition to Kindergarten.



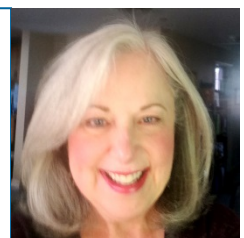
OUR FIVE NON-NEGOTIABLE CORE PRACTICES

Based upon community organizing principles, Parent Teacher Home Visits are not “drop ins”, but rather an appointment between two willing colleagues in a setting where teachers do not have the power/institutional advantage. The teacher is the expert on the curriculum and the family is the expert on the child. By sharing their mutual hopes, dreams and goals for the child, the colleagues become partners.

Once the partners have established a relationship, they continue to build trust, communication and mutual accountability in support of the child’s academic and developmental success.

“PTHV provides a perfect opportunity to jump start the relationships between families and teachers. Family engagement is a developmental process, and the early use of PTHV provides a model for the high-quality relationships our families will establish with their children’s teachers going forward as our children transition to kindergarten and beyond.”

Debrah Watson, CT Office of Early Childhood, Hartford, CT



Replacing Assumptions with Relationships

Prior to PTHV, there were few effective professional development programs for family engagement that included a framework for bridging cultural and socioeconomic diversity. Despite the rapidly changing demographics in the US, where the majority of teachers are white and middle class, and the majority of the public school students are low-income children of color, teacher credential programs do not equip educators for the infinite variety of home cultures of their students, nor for the dynamics of race and class that have been proven to result in significant inequity in public education, most notably in discipline and academic achievement.

PTHV training and practice address the barriers that get in the way of effective partnerships. The training builds awareness and vocabulary about culture, race and bias, and helps educators identify their assumptions, and leave them at the door. The training team always includes a parent of color, and roleplays of the respectful ask for a visit and other parts of the process.

Reflection afterwards is essential. Educators follow every visit with a debrief, which includes reflection on any assumptions before the visit, what they learned about the family's strengths and interests, and how they will apply what they learned toward the child's success.



“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. Now, we look back through our experiences with home visits -- that has been more powerful for us than anything we got in our teacher training.”

– Jena Anderson, Title 1 Teacher, Warren Elementary, Helena, Montana

Home Visiting in Washington D.C.

In Washington DC, preschool teachers, with support from PTHV, are using home visits to create a positive pattern of school attendance and to create strong bonds between school and family early. Researchers at the Urban Institute have shown that regular attendance in preschool is a strong predictor of attendance in the elementary grades.ⁱ

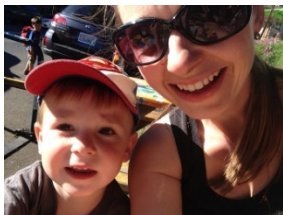
A recent study of 4 schools in the DC area have shown that the home visit strategy is making a critical difference. According to the evaluators, home visits are playing a key role in creating a positive pattern of school attendance

and family school relationships. ⁱⁱ An earlier study of 12 DC area schools showed that students who received home visits experienced 24% fewer absences than students who did not receive visits. ⁱⁱⁱ

Going Forward

PTHV is currently supporting home visit work in 19 states and is recognized as a best practice by the US Department of Education. The US DOE report, “Dual-Capacity-Building-Framework For Family-School Partnerships,” lifts up PTHV as a high impact engagement strategy because it exemplifies the report’s conditions for impact: PTHV is relational, builds knowledge and skills for both teachers and families, and is linked to learning. Evaluations and third-party studies show the impact of relational home visits on students, families and educators, such as higher student test scores, improved school climate, increased parent participation at school, and increased capacity and satisfaction for educators.

Inspired by the success of PTHV in the pre-K-12 grades, education advocates are successfully bringing the PTHV model to early childhood settings, such as the SUN Community Schools of Multnomah County, OR and Preschool Development Grant classrooms of the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. PTHV is seeking to grow the model of home visiting in the early grades by supporting peer learning among early childhood educators, through conducting a national, multi-site evaluation and by bringing the training model to educators in more districts.



“We held our first two PTHV trainings earlier this month and they both went super well! We got great feedback from our groups and we had everything we needed to structure them well and be confident facilitators. Thank you for all of your support and for trusting us to grow this exciting work!” -- Brooke Chilton Timmons, Early Learning Coordinator, SUN Service System, Multnomah County, Portland, OR

To learn more about home visits and early childhood education, please contact Carrie Rose at carrie@pthvp.org.

ⁱ Does Attendance in Early Education Predict Attendance in Elementary School?:An Analysis of DCPS’s Early Education Program, Lisa Dubay, Nikhil Holla, June 2016, Urban Institute

ⁱⁱ Improving PreKindergarten Attendance: School Level Strategies for Messaging, Engaging Parents, and Responding to Absences in 4 DC Public Schools. Michael Katz, Martha Johnson, Gina Adams, Urban Institute July 2016.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Family Engagement Partnership: Student Outcome Evaluation. Steven B Sheldon, Sol Bee Jung, John Hopkins University School of Education Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships, September 2015.