



For immediate release

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Do Parent Teacher Home Visits change the attitudes and assumptions that families and educators hold about each other?

WK Kellogg Foundation funds new study

Battle Creek, MI – How does knowledge of a student’s home life influence the way their teacher teaches? How can you get parents and teachers working from the same page to drive student success? The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), one of the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States, has committed to a new study that measures the change in attitudes and assumptions among participants in Parent Teacher Home Visits (PTHV). WKKF has committed \$150,000 in a two-year grant for an evaluation commissioned by the national nonprofit Parent Teacher Home Visits (PTHV), based in Sacramento, CA. The study will be led by researchers from Center for Evaluation and Study of Educational Equity, RTI and Johns Hopkins University, and, for the first time, will collect data from across four school districts with established home visit programs: Sacramento, CA; Denver, CO; Reno, NV and Washington, DC.

Previous evaluations within single districts indicate that when educators trained in the PTHV model made a voluntary home visit, numerous benefits resulted, such as higher student test scores, improved attendance and school climate, increased parent participation at school, and increased capacity and job satisfaction for educators. **Underlying these improvements, the evaluators found, was that the attitudes of the teachers and the family members about each other significantly improved after just**

one home visit under this model. This change in mindset is especially meaningful in the context of increasingly diverse public school populations, where cultural assumptions, unconscious bias and a history of mistrust may be barriers to teachers and families working together effectively to support their student's learning.

“In our nation’s public schools today, most teachers are white, middle class, and female, while most of their students’ families are people of color living in low-income neighborhoods. Even well-meaning educators can have unconscious assumptions about their students’ home lives, which become barriers to forming effective collaborations with parents,” said Jennifer Laird, PhD, project lead and program director in RTI’s Center for Evaluation and Study of Educational Equity.

PTHV did not start as an equity strategy. The point was to get parents and teachers in collaboration so that kids would learn. The challenge to unite the family and the school in a multi-cultural low-income neighborhood in South Sacramento in the late 1990s had a local history with local pain: the majority of the kids were not reading at grade level, district superintendents revolved in and out, and though parents were told they were “partners,” they felt they were treated like problems.



“I didn’t need the teachers to tell me how to be a better parent,” says Yesenia Gonzalez, a founding parent, “I needed to know how better to advocate for my children within the school and in the district.”

The problem is not limited to white teachers and children of color. Even when a staff is diverse, a single teacher will likely be working with students (and their families) who are ethnically, racially, linguistically

or culturally different than his/her own. Differences in socioeconomic status also multiply barriers between educators and families. Those differences may lead to assumptions, missed opportunities, and negative behavior. But the home visit model provides a structure in which barriers may be overcome.



“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

RTI’s study will explore the relationship between PTHV and shifts in teacher and family mindsets. The study will begin with a multidisciplinary literature review of cognitive bias and promising practices for disrupting biases in schools related to ethnicity and culture. The researchers will then conduct in-person interviews and focus groups with teachers and parents from four districts using PTHV – Denver, Reno, Sacramento, and Washington, D.C. – to better understand whether and how meeting families in their home leads to positive mindset shifts among teachers and parents.

As part of this study, RTI is creating an evaluation advisory group made up of representatives from PTHV, as well as parents, teachers, and leadership from schools participating in the program. Findings from this study will support the refinement of PTHV practices. RTI and PTHV, in partnership with Dr. Steven Sheldon from Johns Hopkins University, also plan to extend this research to examine how the home visit program is being implemented across the four sites and its impact on parent engagement and student achievement.



The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal pioneer, Will Keith Kellogg, is guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive. WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life. The Kellogg Foundation is based in Battle Creek, Michigan, and works throughout the United States and internationally, as well as with sovereign tribes. Special emphasis is paid to priority places where there are high concentrations of poverty and where children face significant barriers to success.



“I can't express how beneficial these home visits have been in terms of understanding my students. Home visits often shed light on strengths that don't show up on standardized tests.

Teaching in high-poverty schools during the past four years, I've conducted more than 80 home visits. After these visits, not one of the families missed a parent-teacher conference or failed to return a phone call.”

Stephanie Smith, Oak Ridge Elementary, Sacramento County Teacher of the Year 2015

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To learn more about PTHV, visit pthvp.org and contact Carrie Rose, Executive Director, PTHV, carrie@pthvp.org, (916) 752-3206.

To learn more about RTI education work, visit www.rti.org/practice-area/education-and-workforce-development.



For more information about W.K. Kellogg Foundation, visit www.wkkf.org and contact 269.968.1611 or communications@wkkf.org.