THE IMPACT OF HOME VISITS

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS

in

EDUCATION
(Educational Leadership)

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

FALL
2009
THE IMPACT OF HOME VISITS

A Thesis

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Dr. Geni Cowan, Graduate Coordinator                             Date

Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Abstract

of

THE IMPACT OF HOME VISITS

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Lisa Michelle Levasseur

Brief Review of the Literature

The main idea of a home visit is to build a bridge between the parent and teacher in order to work together to help the child become successful in school. Researcher Delisio (2006) found that showing up at students’ doors—establishing a positive relationship with students’ families—is one of the most important tools in school reform, particularly in low-income, urban district. Epstein (2001) stated how parents remain important influences in their children’s lives when it comes to academics, decisions about schoolwork, and behaviors both at school and away. Mapp’s (2003) research has proven that home visits increase grades and test scores, better school attendance, increase graduation rates, and more produce positive attitudes.

Statement of the Problem

Currently, in many schools there is a huge disconnect between the home and the school. The purpose of this study is to examine that disconnect and how home visits are having an impact on closing it. The researcher has studied the following areas: parental engagement, attendance, academics, and discipline in schools that have successfully been doing home visits. This study will evaluate what impact home visits have made in...
bridging the gap between the home and the school. In addition, this study will evaluate what is being done professionally to help teachers conduct successful home visits and then examine what else can be done.

**Methodology**

The literature reviewed for this study came from numerous different sources. The citations include journal articles, books, websites, and government documents. Data was also collected from three questionnaires that were sent out to educators, parents, and home visit site coordinators in a school district in Northern California.

**Conclusions Reached**

Overall, the impact of home visits is great. Literature reviewed and the questionnaires collected indicate home visits have a positive impact on the relationship between the home and the school. When home visits are conducted successfully in a school, attendance and test scores rise and discipline decreases. Families are more engaged and success is felt.

_________________________, Committee Chair
Virginia Dixon, Ed.D

_________________________
Date
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to all the hardworking staff and teachers involved with The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project. It is the teachers, trainers, and staff of The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project whom have inspired me to do this research. It is their tireless efforts to continue working on building the bridge between home and school that motivated me to do this research. I would also like to dedicate this study to my wonderful and supportive parents and in-laws that made it possible for me to continue professionally developing my passion for education. Finally, there is no way any of this would have been possible if it was not for my amazing and loving family. My two sweet children who I hope will some day understand why Mommy was gone so many nights and weekends. I hope they too will grow up always being life long learners. Last but not least, to my rock: my husband. Without his devotion I would not be here. Thanks Dave, for encouraging me to take this journey and for always supporting me every step of the way. I love you!
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Dr. Dixon for her advice and support throughout this journey. She is an excellent and patient advisor and without her I would not have made it to the end. I would also like to thank Dr. Lee for his time and guidance throughout the past two years. Without him I would not be graduating.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a Home Visit?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Issues</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Home Visits Impact a School</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Benefits of Home Visits</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and School Discipline</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development and the Education of Teachers</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale of the Study</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Question 2-Do You Feel We Need More Parent Volunteers at ABC School?</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Question 3-Do You Feel there is a Discipline Problem at ABC School?</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Question 8-Do You feel there is a Need at ABC Elementary School to Learn More about the Home Visit Process?</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Question 9-Do you have an Interest in Learning More about the Home Visit Process?</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Question 10-Would You be Interested in Learning How to Do a Home Visit?</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Question 1-Do You Have More than One Child at ABC School?</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Question 4-Did You Attend Back to School Night this Year?</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Question 5-Have You Spoken with or Met Your Child’s Teacher Yet?</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Question 4-Do You Feel You Know What is Happening at ABC School?</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Question 8-How Important are Parent Teacher Conferences to You?</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Question 9-Are You Involved in the School’s PTA?</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Question 10-If You Are Not Involved, Would You Like to Join the PTA?</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Question 4-What Level Do You Teach?</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Question 8-How Many Home Visits Took Place at Your Site Under the Nell Soto Parent Teacher Involvement Grant?</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Question 10-Is Your Site Interested in Continuing Home Visits in the Future?</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Question 11-Do You Feel Your Faculty was Prepared to Do Home Visits?</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Question 12-Would Your Faculty Like More Training Regarding Home Visits?</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Number of Years at ABC Elementary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Attendance Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Disconnect Among Students and Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Disconnect Among Parents and Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Will a Home Visit Program Help?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Home Visit Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>What Grade is Your Child In?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Years at ABC School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>How the Participant Stays Informed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Getting Involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Meeting with the Teacher Outside of School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>The Percentage of Teachers Who Were Trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Teachers Who Actively Did Home Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Materials Brought Along on Home Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Changes Attributed to the Home Visit Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Future Training Ideas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

It is a Friday night and there is another school sponsored “family game night” in the cafeteria; unfortunately, the room is only one fourth full. The principal and teachers are frustrated by the lack of family support at school-sponsored events. Attendance for Back to School Night and parent teacher conferences was low. Teachers are struggling to get across the important message of good attendance and coming to school on time, yet the families are not attending these activities. Test scores are down, suspensions are up and the frustration among faculty and staff in this urban elementary school is increasing.

At many public schools nationwide, one will often find teachers complaining about the lack of support or parent involvement on the school campus (Peralta-Nash, 2003). Many teachers have formed their own assumptions as to why this lack of involvement has happened such as; parents are too busy to involve themselves in the lives of their children, or that parents believe it is only up to the teacher to educate the child. Unfortunately, this problem is all too common in Title One or low socio-economic schools (Peralta-Nash, 2003). Are these assumptions true or does the problem fall into a miscommunication among families and school personnel?

The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project set out as part of their mission to squash these assumptions, by creating an atmosphere of trust, respect, and to increase communication between families and the schools via home visits. Home visits have been
taking place for decades, but what impact do they have? Are home visits successful in changing the relationship between the home and school?

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to research the impact of home visits. Do they make a difference in the relationship between the home and school, and if so, what changes are taking place in the schools? This study set out to answer the following questions:

1. Do home visits make a difference in the relationship between home and school?
2. What impact do home visits have on attendance, academics and discipline?
3. What can districts do in the way of professional development to help educators conduct successful home visits?

This study also examined what is being done professionally for teachers to conduct successful home visits and asked what needs to happen next. Several schools in a large school district in Northern California committed two years to conducting home visits on a regular basis. All of these participating schools were suffering from the lack of parent involvement on their campus. All the schools listed one or more of the following as a problem at their school: poor attendance, low-test scores, low parent involvement, and/or high suspension rate. The educators of these schools not only were frustrated with what was happening on their campuses, but also had moved into problem solving mode.
Definition of Terms

This section of the research includes all applicable terms that are specific to the study to help illustrate and illuminate the subject.

**Assembly Bill 33:** A bill that allocated grants to schools in accordance with prescribed criteria, for the purpose of strengthening communication between schools and parents. The bill required that the grants awarded under the program be used for stipends to pay teachers who conducted home visits and other purposes of the program (Assembly Bill 33, 1999).

**Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965:** The most expansive federal education bill ever passed to date, on April 9, 1965, as a part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty," (United States Department of Education, 2001a).

**Family Engagement:** The act of participating/engaging oneself in an event or a gathering that takes place at a school campus or school event.

**Harvard Family Research Project:** An organization that helps stakeholders develop and evaluate strategies to promote the well being of children, youth, families and their communities (Flanigan, 2005).

**Head Start:** A private not-for-profit membership organization dedicated exclusively to meeting the needs of early childhood education for children ages three and four (National Head Start Association, 2009).

**Highly Qualified Teacher:** Under No Child Left Behind (as cited in US Department of Education, 2001b) a teacher is highly qualified if the teacher proves that he or she knows the subjects he or she is teaching, has a college degree, and is state-
certified. NCLB requires that students be taught by a HQT in core academic subjects (US Department of Education, 2001b).

**Home Visits**: Visits with school families which are conducted by an educator that take place off the school campus, in the home environment of the student.

**No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)**: A federal law passed in 2001 under the George W. Bush administration. NCLB represents legislation that attempts to accomplish standards-based education reform (US Department of Education, 2001b).

**Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP)**: An inexpensive and easily replicated model of family engagement that has been documented to end the cycle of blame between families and school staff by building trust and respect, instilling cultural competency and increasing personal and professional capacity for all involved (Parent Teacher Home Visit Project, 2009, www.PTHVP.org).

**Professional Development**: The act of enhancing one’s career by taking classes or attending workshops relating to their field of work.

**School Attendance Review Board (SARB)**: This board is composed of representatives from various youth-serving agencies, to help truant or recalcitrant students and their parents or guardians solve school-attendance and behavior problems through the use of available school and community resources (SARB Handbook, 1974, as cited in California Department of Education, 1999).

**Socioeconomically**: Relating to or concerned with the interaction of social and economic factors.
Significance of the Study

The significance of this research is extremely valuable for three reasons. First, The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) (2005) relied on the data collected from the third survey to find out which schools actively did home visits, what schools wanted to continue to do them, and what tools do the schools need next to make their home visit programs more successful. Second, the significance of this research is important to learn why there is a disconnect between the home and school and how home visits can help administrators, teachers, and counselors ameliorate that disconnect. Finally, this research is significant to prove why home visits work and to explain why it is important to dedicate professional development to the topic.

There is a definite need for this study because with the federal No Child Left Behind law and with grants such as the state funded Nell Soto, there is still a disconnect at many educational sites between what happens at the home and what takes place at school. There is also a need for this study because it helps The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project to examine what is working and where they need to go next. The results of the study will also help administrators to see the importance of home visits and how they can positively impact a school and all who are involved with the school. This research will contribute to the field of education by helping school leaders show evidence of reliable and factual data, which in turn will help verify how home visits make a positive difference in the relationship between the home and the school. The end goal for the researcher is to take the information gathered and analyzed, and to share the results with all educators who are interested in starting a home visit project. The information collected
from the third questionnaire will help The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project in deciding what steps are needed to best ensure that home visits continue in the school district and beyond.

This study was undertaken in order to research the impact home visits were having on the schools involved. The study is relevant for two reasons. First, its outcomes impact the future of home visits at certain school sites. Second, it influences how future generations of families and educators will commit to conducting home visits.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

At many public schools across the nation, there are teachers complaining about the lack of support or parent involvement on their campus. Unfortunately, this problem is all too common in Title One or low socio-economic schools (Delisio, 2006). Many teachers have formed their own opinions as to why this has happened, with perceptions such as, parents are too busy, they are not involved enough in the lives of their children, or they simply just do not care. Is this really the problem or is there a miscommunication between the schools and the families that attend them? Kyle and McIntyre (2000) stated in their paper a very simple answer to this problem: “The more you know about a child’s family, the better you can meet the child’s needs and the best way to learn about the family is to be there with them” (p. 1). Researcher Karen Mapp (2003) found during more than three decades of studies that regardless of economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds, there continues to always be a strong tie between educational benefits to children and family engagement at the school. So, how does one go about achieving that family engagement?

How does one school go about changing the lack of parental support? How do schools help parents and students to feel more connected to their school? Many schools claim they welcome parent participation, yet do not provide a hospitable climate for parents (Aronson, 1996). Visitors typically encounter notices directing them to report to the front office, which can often be intimidating when a parent does not speak good
English or is reluctant to approach the school in the first place. Research has documented that parents want their children to do well in school, and that parents have a genuine and deep-seated desire to help their child succeed academically, but the problem lies in the fact that many parents do not know how to go about accomplishing that goal (Mapp, 2003). Parents may understand clearly that their involvement helps a child to succeed, but they do not understand how to start. Epstein (2001) stated in her research that families care about their children’s success, but most families need more and better information from schools. How does one go about accomplishing that goal? How does a school raise test scores and lower suspension rates on their campus? Many teachers and principals ask these questions several times throughout the school year. There are numerous strategies and ideas that work. However, are teachers prepared to take on these new approaches? Have they received enough education and experience in their credential training programs? Once they have become highly qualified teachers, do they receive enough professional training to help them handle communicating with parents and students? One solution for many of these questions has to do with the idea of teacher home visits.

**What is a Home Visit?**

The idea of doing a home visit is not a relatively new phenomenon; the program Head Start has been doing them for years. Steele-Carlin (2009) wrote that many Head Start teachers are expected to make at least two home visits for each student during the school year. The main idea of a home visit is to build a bridge between the parent and teacher in order to work together to help the child become successful in school. Home
visits provide an opportunity to openly communicate and work more closely together to support student learning. The philosophy behind home visits is to also build a relationship with the family in order to assist the family in becoming more comfortable with the education process. By doing a home visit, the teacher is able to gain a different perspective of the child they see every day in the classroom, while in return the student and parents are able to see a teacher who cares for them outside the hours of the school day.

Over the past ten years, home visits have become more popular in schools where there are low achievement scores, behavior problems, or a lack of parental support. With the passing of The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, many teachers are becoming more open to the idea of trying to break down the barriers that a school atmosphere might create for some parents. In Title I schools, parental involvement always has been a centerpiece. However, for the first time in the history of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, parental involvement has a statutory definition. The statute defined parental involvement as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring—

- parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning;
- parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school; and,
Parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child (US Department of Education, 2001b).

The No Child Left Behind Act stressed shared accountability between the parent and the school when it comes to higher achievement. A synthesis of the research concluded that the evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

One avenue that educators are starting to use is the ability to reach out past the school walls and connect with students in their homes. In 1999, California passed Assembly Bill 33, which provided $40 million in state funds over five years for school districts to conduct home visits and set up programs to help get parents more involved in education. “AB 33 encourages strong parent involvement by offering new opportunities for parents to be engaged” (Rhee, 1999, p. 1). Ten schools in Sacramento experimented with this program for a couple of years. The results were a huge success. Rhee (1999) also stated that 89 percent of the parents felt that their children were doing better academically, and 98 percent of the teachers agreed that students’ academic skills improved since the home visit program started. A home visit can offer invaluable insights about students (Kyle & McIntyre, 2000). One teacher stated how many of his students are bussed across town, so going out to their neighborhood to do a home visit helps him learn a lot about where they come from (Fisch, Hernandez & Trumbull, 2003). By visiting a
home, a teacher can help the bridge from school to home. This can also reveal the emotional and social needs and behaviors of students. Through a home visit, an educator can identify students’ latest interests or concerns. These new findings can help a teacher construct their lesson plans to make them more engaging to their students. According to Delisio (2006), author of *Home Visits Forge School, Family Links*, “Educators today are finding, that showing up at students’ doors—establishing a positive relationship with students’ families—is an important tool in school reform, particularly in low-income, urban districts where educators traditionally struggle to build parent involvement” (p. 1).

She also stated the importance of starting the school year off by making a casual visit to the home. During this visit, grades are not discussed. She explained that this visit is primarily an opportunity for the teacher to get to know the family on a more personal level. This visit provides the teacher a chance to see what the atmosphere at home is like, which in turn helps the teacher better prepare for the child at school.

A casual visit can serve as an invitation to parents to become a partner with the teacher in educating the child throughout the school year. Once a relationship of trust has been established, a teacher may choose to do a second home visit, where this time they bring test scores, or informational resources to help the family. For example, Dryfoos (1996) mentioned bringing resources on where a family may go for medical or dental help, or where a family can go to receive mentoring for their child. It may also be as simple as bringing a library card application or an application for a child to sign up for community sports or after-school programs. In *Making Connections between Home and School*, Furger (2002) stated that by doing these home visits in the beginning of the
school year, the result is a commitment to building relationships between home and school; that way everyone can work together towards a common goal.

Legal Issues

Although home visits seem like a great idea to help fix a problem, many teachers are concerned about the legal ramifications behind doing them. They are concerned that families will feel like they are getting in trouble if a teacher comes to their house. Most teachers do not want the family to feel like they are going through the School Attendance Review Board (SARB) process. Many educators have concerns about what they should do if they visit a home and they see illegal activity or an unsafe living environment for a child? Another concern many teachers have has to do with going alone on a home visit. Finally, another common problem is how does one fit a home visit into their already busy schedule? Many administrators are flooded with these types of questions when scheduling a home visit training session for their teachers; however, if an administrator has done their research the answers will do much to set an educator at ease with the whole process.

In numerous schools across the nation, attendance is an issue; nevertheless, there are several prevention steps one can take to making it less of a problem. In 1974, the California Legislature enacted a statute to enhance the enforcement of school attendance. The statute created School Attendance Review Boards (SARB), “composed of representatives from various youth-serving agencies, to help truant or recalcitrant students and their parents or guardians solve school-attendance and behavior problems
through the use of available school and community resources” (SARB Handbook, 1999, as cited in California Department of Education (CDE), 1999, p. v). SARB was created to keep students in school and out of trouble. “A county SARB is established under the authority of Education Code Section 48321” (SARB Handbook, as cited in California Department of Education (CDE), 1999, p. 9).

Education Code Section 48321 stated who is qualified to be at a SARB meeting:

(2) The county school attendance review board, if established, shall include, but need not be limited to, all of the following:

A. A parent.
B. A representative of school districts.
C. A representative of the county probation department.
D. A representative of the county welfare department.
E. A representative of the county superintendent of schools.
F. A representative of law enforcement agencies.
G. A representative of community-based youth service centers.
H. A representative of school guidance personnel.
I. A representative of child welfare and attendance personnel.
J. A representative of school or county health care personnel.

(3) The school district representatives on the county school. (SARB Handbook, as cited in California Department of Education (CDE), 1999, p. 9)

According to the SARB Handbook (1999, students are referred to SARB if they have a constant attendance problem and other avenues have not worked. The SARB
process can be very intimidating for parents and students and therefore should try to be avoided. There are several ways of prevention that a school can try; for example, attendance awareness month, recognition of students and classrooms modeling high attendance, and teacher home visits. With the right home visit training, teachers can help prevent the student from ever having to go through the SARB process. A SARB meeting should ultimately be the last resort for a school and the district and hopefully it is a final resort that many schools will never have to use if a school brings in programs like a parent/teacher home visit program.

A parent/teacher home visit program can be very time consuming. Calling families, conducting home visits, and doing the follow-up paperwork can take a lot of time and effort. Many teachers fear they do not have enough time and money to fit it all in. The California state legislators agreed with the teachers on this concern and therefore passed a bill to help solve this problem. California Assembly Bill 33 and Senate Bill 33 are evidence of the growing community support families and teachers have received in regards to teacher home visit projects. “These bills provided and extended the availability of small grants to support school efforts to conduct home visits and strengthen teacher/parent involvement in other ways” (Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP), 2004, p. 2). One of the grants that came from Assembly Bill 33 was the Nell Soto Grant. This grant was designed to help schools in which a majority of parents and teachers agree to strengthen relationships between the school and parents in order to help the student succeed in academics. The grant also specified that priority for home visits shall be given
to low-performing students. In order for schools to receive Nell Soto grant money, they had to obtain the following:

- At least 50 percent of the educators at the school site had to voluntarily agree to participate in periodic home visits.
- At least 50 percent of the parents of students enrolled in the school had to voluntarily agree to allow periodic home visits.
- Teachers participating in the grant must receive training on how to do home visits.
- Teachers shall be compensated for their time spent doing home visits at an hourly rate comparable to their regular base salary.

If the school satisfies the requirements to receive money from the Nell Soto Grant, the money will be allocated according to the enrollment size of the school. Small schools will receive grant money of $15,000 and large enrollment schools will receive grant money of $35,000 dollars. The funds may be used to compensate teachers and teaching paraprofessionals, to provide training to teachers and teaching paraprofessionals, and to defray other costs associated with the implementation of the Nell Soto Parent/Teacher Involvement Program (CDE, 1999). This grant has calmed the fears of many teachers who were concerned about putting forth all the time and effort and not getting compensated for it. Under the Nell Soto Grant, teachers must be trained on how to do a home visit, but once they are trained they can begin to be paid for their home visit efforts.
Another common legal concern when doing a home visit has to do with the issue of mandated reporting. Many teachers fear when out doing a home visit they will see something that might trigger the duty of mandated reporting. Law considers the following person a mandated reporter, “Any citizen can make a report of suspected or known child abuse to a child protective services agency. A Mandated Reporter is legally required to report if they know of or have "Reasonable Suspicion" of child abuse and neglect, encountered in the scope of their employment” (Child Abuse Prevention Council of Sacramento, 2008). Whether at school or a child’s home, educators are required by law to be mandated reporters. However, the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) has found the occurrence of mandated reporting to be very rare. The reason has to do with their model of home visits. PTHVP has designed the model to be respectful and trains the teacher to set up a home visit in advance so the families are not surprised when a teacher shows up at their door. The purpose of home visits is to establish a relationship of trust with the families; surprising them at home does not help to develop trust. By calling in advance to set up a visit and then calling the day before to confirm, a teacher can begin to build an equal partnership, where parent and teacher can empower each other in order to help find academic and social success for the student.

Another concern about home visits is the idea of going alone. The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project has two reasons for requiring their teachers to go with a colleague when conducting a home visit. The first reason is simply a safety factor. Many visits are done later in the afternoon and evening hours and going with a colleague to a new area is simply safer than going alone. The second reason has to do with a school district’s
insurance policy. According to the school district, a home visit is merely an extension of
the school day and therefore by going with a colleague, the teachers are covered by the
school district’s insurance policy.

Home visits will not be successful for a classroom or a school if the teachers do
not feel comfortable or prepared to do them. If a school is going to start carrying out
home visits, they must have the majority of the teachers involved or the program will not
reach its full potential, parents will talk, and those who are not visited will feel cheated or
even worse, just turned off by the educational system as a whole. In order for a home
visit program to really work, many things must fall into place. Key elements should
include motivated teachers, a school/community eager to improve their schools by
building community involvement and support, and adequate training for the school staff
so they feel comfortable stepping into a student’s home. It also helps to have an
administrator who is familiar with the laws behind home visits and district support when
starting a new project that involves the school and the community. Finally, it really helps
to have money in the beginning, but is definitely not a necessity in the end (Yeats, 2007).
After doing home visits, many schools found the process to be so successful and fulfilling
that even after the grant money ran out they continued to do home visits (Peralta-Nash,
2003). In fact, Reglin (2002) found that many teachers felt their job was much more
rewarding and enjoyable not because they had the best bulletin board in the school, but
because they had made a personal connection with many of their students and their
families and nothing could top that connection.
How Home Visits Impact a School

Parents as Partners

Most teachers want their students’ parents to be involved in their classrooms and at the school, but many teachers complain they never see their students’ parents on campus and if they do, it is only for twenty minutes at parent teacher conferences. On occasion, teachers make this complaint but never do anything about changing the problem. Many believe that parents and teachers should be allies and partners, but struggle on how to make that connection happen. “After all, they are both engaged in the important and precious work of raising, guiding, and teaching our children” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003, p. 21). Numerous parents from “minority” backgrounds indicate they would prefer a more personal relationship with their children’s teachers (Fisch et al., 2003). In fact, many also indicated they would like the opportunities to interact informally, not just through formal events like parent conferences or back to school night. So how does this start? Allen (2008) stated, to start this conversation, schools should gather groups of educators, students, and family members to brainstorm a list of everything the school does to involve families. After examining the lists, the group should ask themselves what families are benefitting and what families are missing, and then make an effort to reach those parents who are absent from participating at their child’s school.

Despite parent education, family size, student ability or school level parents are more likely to become partners in their child’s education if they perceive the schools have strong practices to involve parents at the school (Davies, Henderson, Johnson & Mapp,
Epstein (2001) stated how parents remain important influences in their children’s lives when it comes to academics, decisions about schoolwork, and behaviors both at school and away. There are many assumptions made by school employees as to why parents do not come to school functions; however, oftentimes, it is as simple as calling them up and inviting them to come step foot on the campus.

Long (2007) wrote in *Parents in the Picture*, “Sometimes all it takes is a friendly invitation from one parent to another. In the right hands, that invitation can even break long-standing cultural, language and socioeconomic barriers” (p. 27). In many cases, parents just need to know they are welcomed at the school. One positive call home is usually all it will take because most often, when a teacher calls home, it is not on a positive note.

Epstein (2001) commented in her research if teachers, parents, principals, and community partners all work together on a common goal, the student will be successful in the end. When parents are respected as experts about their children, they tend to be more open and in the end a trust is established. This carries over to success in the classroom. Knowing a students’ outside interests, families, and home routines, and then taking this information and using it to create meaningful and relevant curriculum, can have huge rewards in helping to construct happier, healthier, and smarter kids (Kyle & McIntyre, 2000).

Mapp (2003) found a school in Boston, Massachusetts, which decided to address the issue of family involvement. The school year began by the staff creating a committee which was made up of approximately ten teachers and parents. The committee was
racially and socioeconomically diverse. The committee then began to meet regularly to strategize how to reach out to families and encourage their involvement. The team developed a program of home visitations to families in order to reach out for their support. The committee developed a design for their home visits to make sure they were not going out and lecturing parents on how they should be involved. Rather, they delivered a message that families were respected and welcomed at the school. As a result of the home visitation program, families who were not involved before began coming to the school for the first time. After a few years of this program being successful, the committee decided to develop positive relationships right from the start with families new to the school. In the Fall, new families would receive a home visit from someone on the committee. This too, became a huge success.

If educators are truly interested in establishing a dialogue with parents they need to understand what parents are thinking (Finders & Lewis, 1994). Parents need to know exactly how they can help. Finders and Lewis (1994) found in their research that many low-income Latino parents want to help, but do not know how or they feel intimidated by the educational system. In fact, the lowest rates of parent involvement are often among minority homes (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003). Many parent involvement activities ignore cultural perspectives of the minority populations at their schools. Many minority parents want to be involved in their child’s school but do not know how to translate their desire into effective involvement.

To help a parent overcome their fear of the educational system and become involved in their child’s school, a teacher can start by learning about a parent’s own
school experience. This is a great discussion to have during a home visit. Finders and Lewis (1994) discovered many parents had a problem with their own personal school experiences; therefore, they do not feel comfortable or confident in school settings. Mapp (2003) discovered that often, the history of their own parents’ experiences influenced whether or not they participated at their child’s school. Many of those interviewed who did not currently participate in their child’s school, did so because there was little to no participation from their parents as they were growing up; therefore, they did not know how to get involved.

In *The Impact of Home Visit in Students’ Perception of Teaching*, Peralta-Nash (2003) stated how important it is to include the parents in the educational decision making process. She felt home visits allowed her to hear the parents’ voices, as well as help her to understand their perspectives. By visiting a child’s home a teacher is able to listen to the parent’s experience with the educational system in a non-invasive environment. The teachers should function as sensitive, active listeners. By doing this, it helps the families to feel comfortable and a relationship will slowly start to grow. Teachers must leave behind their preconceived notions of culture and history and become listeners when doing a home visit (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003). Teachers need to put aside any blame in order to best meet the needs of their students. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) recommended beginning with the assumption that all children have “special needs” and on a home visit, the educator is there to find out what those needs are so they can be met in the classroom and at home. If teachers do not go in to listen it is these predetermined perceptions that can inhibit home-school connections.
During the first home visit, many teachers take this opportunity with the parent or guardian to have a conversation about the family background, their community/culture, as well as the parents’ views of school. “In the first home visit, the conversation is open-ended: encouraging parents to lead the conversation and share their thoughts and ideas about their child and school” (Peralta-Nash, 2003, p. 4). By having this conversation it provides the teacher with some insight into why a parent might be intimidated to volunteer at the school and it lets the parent know the teacher cares about the families’ background and experiences. Researchers like Peralta-Nash (2003) found how important it was to step outside the classroom and into a child’s home because it created an opportunity to connect with the student and parent on another level, therefore allowing the student to feel important and valued.

Researchers have also found the importance of bringing the life expertise and knowledge of immigrant families into classroom learning. The Harvard Family Research Project (1997) found that a majority of teachers and administrators lacked the training on how to reach out to parents (as cited in Flanigan, 2005). Their research and literature confirmed there was a need to listen to underrepresented parents of color in poor communities. Parents of low-income or minority children face many barriers when attempting to become active in the schools their children attend.

According to the findings of Gonzalez-DeHass and Willems (2003), parents have fewer opportunities to meet and share information with teachers, to attend events at school due to lack of transportation, money, or childcare. Home visits are a way to take care of those problems. In order to truly reach these parents it was essential to establish
authentic relationships that can help lead to greater than before parental involvement and student success. “Researchers have found that when schools work with parents, everyone involved benefits—students, families and schools” (Allen, 2008, p. 120).

In Margery Ginsberg’s (2007) article, *Lessons at the Kitchen Table*, she wrote about the importance of doing home visits with immigrant families and how a visit can lead to culturally relevant teaching. Ginsberg (2007) commented on how personal stories of determination and struggle from immigrant families have helped to shape schools’ curriculum. Many times their stories of overcoming obstacles have created rich and relevant lessons in the classroom. “Infusing the perspectives and talents of diverse cultures into the curriculum can enhance motivation and achievement” (Quintanar & Warren, 2008, p. 57). Ginsberg (2007) found when an educator does a home visit with the expectation of learning about the family’s background, oftentimes the teacher walks away with fascinating oral histories, interesting ways of organizing complicated lives, and technical expertise that can enrich everyday curriculum in the classroom. The researcher also emphasized the importance of taking on the role of listener when conducting a home visit for the first time.

More often, immigrant parents are new to the education system of the United States and are often intimidated by the whole process. When an educator does a home visit for the first time it is very valuable to do more listening than speaking. Amanti, Gonzalez and Moll (2005) also found in their research that when a teacher did a home visit and began gathering new information about the family, their history and activities, most teachers began making connections to instructional activities in the classroom. In
homes with rich oral traditions, oral communication is important. It can help fracture stereotypes that exist within the school. Amanti et al. (2005) called this concept a “funds of knowledge” (p. 10), this concept is simply based on the premise, “People are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge” (Amanti et al., 2005, p. 10). Therefore, it is crucial to listen to the stories and backgrounds of the parents on the first visit. The more elaborate understanding a teacher can get, the more the teacher can transform curriculum into useful relevant instructional activities (Amanti et al., 2005). By listening to their story, the parents will begin to realize that the teacher has a vested interest in their child and will want to become more invested in the school.

When the parent is involved success happens for the child. As a parent becomes more familiar with curricular and instructional goals and activities, they often become more supportive of the administrators and teachers (Aronson, 1996). Researcher, Gary Reglin (2002), has documented this in a study he conducted in Escambia County, Florida. Reglin (2002) set out to study the effectiveness of home visits and how they affect parental involvement and student success. Research concluded that parental involvement promoted positive change in performance in both the classroom such as improved scores on standardized tests and in basic skills in reading and writing and at home based on homework being completed and being turned in. Reglin (2002) found that the earlier the parent became involved in their child’s education, the better the student did overall.

Another key reason to do home visits is the eye opening experience that happens when stepping into a child’s home environment. Oftentimes, by looking around the
home, it can explain a lot about a child’s disposition at school. Peralta-Nash (2003) stated after a visit with a young boy from her class that she realized that the boy was very shy and quiet because his family was similar. Another visit allowed her to meet some very caring and loving parents who did not come on campus because they were hesitant due to the language barrier. Due to the comfortable setting of the home, the parents were able to open up (through their son translating) about how important it was that their son receives a good education because they never made it past the eighth grade. She also heard during another home visit a parent express how they “believe their needs to be a partnership between the school and home since the school serves as a second home to her child” (Peralta-Nash, 2003, p. 10).

Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) recommended going into a home visit with a goal to put the best plan in place for everyone involved with the child. If a teacher can leave the home with collective decisions from the group on how to get the child to be successful in school, the parent will often feel more connected as a team and want to start becoming more involved. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) also emphasized when meeting with parents the power of the word “we” and how when a teacher uses it, it can signal togetherness and the desire for the educator to be inclusive in the education process.

Having these conversations is what makes home visits so valuable. The visit provides the teacher the opportunity to hear about the realities faced by many parents, as well as the value the parents place on the school system. Taking these steps enables the teachers and parents to understand their roles better and then work together in helping a student to be successful in school. It also helps the parents to not be afraid to ask a
teacher questions or to admit they do not understand something (Furger, 2002). Meyer and Mann (2006) found in their research one positive result from home visits was that it allowed the parent to feel more comfortable when calling the school with a question. By establishing that relationship in the beginning, many parents felt less intimidated when they called the teacher or principal with a concern or question.

However, doing one home visit does not always turn the parent around, at least right away. Long (2007) stated in her research that it sometimes took many phone calls and visits before drawing a parent out. There are many parents out there who have felt alienated from schools. They feel uncomfortable with teachers and are intimidated by the system. A lot of these types of parents blame themselves and are embarrassed if their child is not successful in school. In cases like this, it is often important for teachers to seek out help around the community or to come to community events to try to break down the barriers between these parents and the education system. The bottom line is that everyone has the same goal; they want the child/student to succeed and if teachers can connect on some level with the family, more engagement and participation will happen.

**Academic Benefits of Home Visits**

Besides getting the parents involved in the school, there are many other benefits that come from doing home visits. When a family is engaged in the child’s learning, student achievement will rise (Davies et al., 2007). Researchers Goodwin and Judd (2005) claimed by doing home visits, one is able to appreciate the student’s culture and diversity better. By knowing a student’s background, one can have a strong impact on
their educational experience. By getting to know a student’s culture, background, likes and dislikes, a teacher can take what he/she learned from the visit and incorporate the new knowledge into future lessons; therefore, helping to engage the students in class. Worthy and Hoffman (2001) stated that doing home visits allows the teacher to discuss goals and expectations of their students. It is a valuable time to listen to what the parents expect from the teacher and then have the educator respond with what is expected at their grade level.

A home visit is an ideal opportunity for a teacher to provide a family with resources if a child is struggling academically at school. During a home visit, a teacher might bring over a math tool kit with pencils and paper, or they might bring over a dictionary if resources are limited in the house. Patton (2006) wrote about a school in Rhode Island whose teachers visited over 160 homes, bringing with them baskets tailored to the student’s reading or math level. The baskets included tools for reading and writing and a gift certificate for a local bookstore. Visiting a child’s home for 20-40 minutes can provide the teacher with a wealth of information on how to make the child successful academically. During that visit, a teacher can also introduce several small learning activities which a parent can do around the house to help support the skills a child is learning at school. “For example: using cooking recipes to teach reading, sequencing, and measuring; playing counting and spelling games; doing outdoor science projects” (Davies et al., 2007, p. 67). A home visit should always emphasize how to help a child succeed in school. By introducing simple ideas to parents on how they can help creates more buy in at the home.
Doing home visits also allows the teacher to observe traditions or living situations they might not ever see when staying in the classroom. For example, if a third grade student is only reading 47 words per minute and the teacher notices during a home visit there are no books in the home, or there is not a quiet place for the student to sit and read, a teacher can encourage the parents to provide a good home learning environment for their child to study. One low-income school in Boston, Massachusetts posted some of the highest reading test scores in the area and the families attribute the increase to home visits (Davies et al., 2007). Parents and teachers got together and had extensive conversations about how to improve scores. In the end it was not an award that worked, it was what took place during the home visits. During the home visit the teacher brought books for every child to read and now 95 percent of students and families at the school are involved in the reading program. From these simple home visits, parents began to feel more comfortable when visiting the school and began to participate in more school activities. Parents also began to read more to their children in their native language and borrowed simple to read books in English from the school library. As a result from all of these increased activities, relationships were built and students’ academic performance increased.

Another benefit of home visits has to do with the transition for kindergarten students. Many children struggle with the transition from home to kindergarten, increasing their risk of poor academic results throughout their educational career (Schulting, 2009). Starting home visits in the beginning of a child’s academic career, a
teacher is providing the opportunity to build a positive foundation upon which all future communication is based.

Another benefit of home visits is the likely result of raising student achievement. Delisio (2006) stated in her research that she saw many schools raise test scores after three years of doing home visits. One particular school in this researcher’s district raised its scores more than 200 points on the California State Test after starting a home visit program. Attitudes in the classrooms changed and more learning took place. Delisio (2006) reported that more students were cooperative because they knew their parents and teachers were “on the same page” and they also knew their teacher cared about them more than just inside the classroom.

Other schools in this urban school district that were also doing home visits saw an increase in their test scores by an average of 9.8 percentage points in reading and mathematics. The district averaged a gain of five percentage points in reading and seven percentage points in math (Sandham, 1999). Dryfoos (1996) reported schools having community involvement, often have higher reading and math scores than those schools with less parent involvement. Meyer and Mann (2006) observed in their research that 37% of the teachers they studied commented that after doing home visits they had a better understanding of what the child needed at school. For example, one teacher stated some of their students were offered no help at home with their work; therefore, changing the approach the teacher took at school regarding homework or class work made a difference in helping the students to be successful.
I have become more understanding of the children who are offered no help at home. I have found time to work with them on spelling words and other homework activities. I realized from a home visit that one mother was not able to read. I’m not sure I would have discovered that without the home visit. (Meyer & Mann, 2006, p. 95)

It is observations like these that have helped schools to raise their test scores.

In another study, researchers Arguea and Conroy (2003) studied the effect of parental involvement at a school and the results it had on student achievement. According to their research, it did not matter where the school was located when parents are involved student achievement is higher. Their research showed results in schools that had positive working relationships where the parents and teachers worked together, scores rose as much as six percent, when compared with those schools where there was very little parental engagement.

When doing an effective home visit regarding academics, it is important for a teacher to be prepared. If a teacher is looking to establish a partnership with the parent they must come ready to give the following advice to the parent:

1. There needs to be homework support and structure at home,
2. Clear, realistic homework expectations, and
3. Knowledge of the teacher’s expectations.

In return, in order for the student to be successful they must know the following:

1. Clear knowledge of homework assignments
2. Sufficient preparation to succeed, and
3. The skills needed to complete the homework. (Reglin, 2002, p. 154)

If all parties involved know their roles and fulfill their responsibilities the children will be successful and test scores will improve (Reglin, 2002). When a parent is better able to understand what is taking place in the classroom, they become empowered to better help their children with homework assignments. This understanding can lead to the designing of additional lesson plans and creative curriculum; therefore, changing the way children view and comprehend lessons. Reglin’s (2002) research demonstrated that home visits helped students to complete more homework assignments, earn higher grades, and overall, have a more positive attitude toward school.

Another positive academic result of home visits has to do with the structure and set-up in the home. When doing a home visit an educator is able to see the structure of the home. They allow an educator to see the space the child has to do his or her schoolwork (Worthy & Hoffman, 2001). Is there a quiet place for the child to do their homework? Is the television always on or is there a lot of videogame playing occurring in the home? By getting a sense of the home’s atmosphere, the teacher can make suggestions on how the parents could provide a more enriching learning environment in the home; therefore, allowing the child to feel successful at home, which in return would more likely translate to academic success in the classroom.

Attendance and School Discipline

Do home visits help with attendance and discipline issues at the school? Meyer and Mann (2006) stated that in the schools they studied teachers reported increases of
around 38% in average daily attendance. They also found attendance up, which seemed to relate to parent involvement; 42% of teachers reported an increased number of parents attending parent teacher conferences. Parents and students felt more connected to the school after their home visit, thus making more of an effort to get their child to school and to getting them there on time. Parents began to realize how many of their teachers cared about their children and made it a priority to get their child to school everyday. In addition to increased attendance during school, after school programs were also positively effected (Yeats, 2007). According to Yeats’ (2007) research, many teachers experienced an increase in their after-school tutoring sessions, which the researcher contributes to the parents’ increased awareness of available resources.

Epstein and Sheldon (2002) found in their research on truancy and absenteeism, students with better attendance score higher on achievement tests than their more frequently absent peers. Epstein and Sheldon (2002) found that intensifying interpersonal relationships between students and teachers helped to raise attendance as well. One example studied was how doing a home visit on a student who was constantly absent helped change the pattern. “When schools reached out to families and educators made home visits, they reported decreases in the percentage of students who were chronically absent” (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p. 316). Part of the problem with absent students is schools rarely involve the parents until the problem is so severe that a student is failing. Home visits can help prevent this problem from starting, if the school makes the effort in the beginning of the school year to visit the homes of many of their students and establish a relationship of trust.
Dryfoos (1996) found in her research when it came to getting the parents involved, attendance and graduation rates were significantly higher than in comparable schools that had fewer connections with the families who attended their schools. She found students were more eager to come to school because the teacher took a vested interest in the values and culture of the family. One example of this comes from the research area where a few high schools are trying to avoid attendance problems and decrease dropout rates by doing a home visit for every incoming freshman (Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP), 2005). Research has shown when a high school student is able to connect with someone who cares at the school, a relationship is formed with the school and home the dropout rate is less (Minugh, 2008). “If they can make a connection early, educators say there is less chance the students will flounder as they begin a sometimes daunting stage of their education” (Minugh, 2008, p. 3).

In high school, parents often become less involved, but with home visits happening during summer months before they start high school, the parents are able to hear how important it is to continue to be involved in their child’s educational path. Ferlazzo (2009) found in his research that making a home visit over the summer or early in the school year helped to avoid problems in the classroom during the academic year. During Ferlazzo’s (2009) home visits, he centered the conversation on the student and what their hopes and dreams were. He found this type of discussion so rarely happened between the home and school, that most parents were often shocked that a high school teacher genuinely cared about their child. “Schools spend a lot of time with parents in one-way communication but very little two way conversation” (Ferlazzo, 2009, p. 1). It is
this two-way conversation that takes place during home visits that make the outcomes, like less discipline problems, feasible.

Another important benefit from home visits has to do with the issue of discipline. Dryfoos (1996) found with the connection of home and school property destruction and graffiti began to diminish, along with a decrease in neighborhood violence rates decreased. Many schools invest time and energy into a home visit program because the school is having difficulty with the misbehavior of many students. Delisio (2006) stated in her research that in a period of one year, a school which had suspended 140 students in one year dropped that number to 60 students after they started doing home visits. The students started to become more focused in class and began respecting their teachers and peers more around the school. Also, Delisio’s (2006) research had many teachers who stated that establishing a relationship with the parents helped the students see there was a partnership there. Likewise, whatever happened at school was going to get back home. The students began to realize throughout the year that their parents and teachers communicated and shared similar goals for them. The students knew that if they misbehaved, their teacher had no problem calling home and asking parents for help in a certain area. In fact, many of the teachers encouraged the parents to stop by the classroom or call at anytime if they had questions or concerns.

Goodwin and Judd (2005) indicated that trying to do a home visit within the first months of schools and having the teacher and parents discuss their expectations of their child’s behavior at school also helped with discipline at school. After that visit, the child knew that Mom and Dad had a clear idea of the rules and expectations in the classroom
and at the school; therefore, provided the child with no wiggle room to get around them. Goodwin and Judd (2005) also discovered that because of this communication, students seemed to try harder and goof off less. The researchers also found after home visits started, more parents began to visit the campus, which also brought discipline issues down, especially on the playground where they arose most often.

Professional Development and the Education of Teachers

Many teacher preparation programs are encouraging student teachers to build home-school relationships with the children in their classrooms. Countless administrators and credentialed teachers want to promote parent involvement in their schools; however, this desire goes unrealized due to a lack of know-how (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003). In fact, the question has been raised as to whether such training should be addressed at the pre-service level, in-service level or both. Unfortunately, there are few courses and professional experiences out there dedicated to parent involvement. However, when it comes to communicating and establishing relationships with parents through home visits, what is being done to train new teachers to feel comfortable with this process?

The University of Maine took on a new approach to this topic when the professors themselves starting doing home visits of the students in their credential classes. “We tell these novice teachers that parents will be important, even essential, partners in their work. But if there’s one thing we’ve learned as teacher educators, it’s that the things that will
endure from our classes are those things our students have tried themselves” (Power, 2000, p. 10).

The professors at the University of Maine decided to do home visits with their current credential students because why not practice what they preached. The results they found were the following:

- Home visits were time consuming, but worth it.
- More student participation.
- An increase of attendance.
- The professors gained a better understanding of their student’s backgrounds and what they really needed to emphasize in class. This insight led to the development of a few changes in their program.
- Families have a vital role to play in facilitating learning for students of any age.
- Finally, the actions of an educator sometimes far outweigh what they say.

(Power, 2000, p. 10)

The University of Maine professors found in their research the importance of connecting with a student beyond the classroom walls. When there is a disconnect between family and school, success for the student is harder to reach.

Carolyn Flanigan of Academic Development Institute/Illinois Professional Learner’s Partnership asked this similar question in 2005. Flanigan (2005) did a study on whether or not pre-service teachers were adequately prepared to communicate with parents and communities. According to the Illinois Professional Standards and many
other state standards, the topic of school, parent, and community partnerships must be integrated into the required curriculum. However, in many states like Illinois, the standards do not specify how much time needs to be spent on the subject. In Flanigan’s (2005) study, she found that 84% of her respondents taught one or more courses that included the theme, but only 16% taught a course on the topic of partnering with parents and communities. Many professors who responded to Flanigan’s (2005) survey felt more course work/experience was needed for pre-service teachers in the area of parent and community communication, but many found it challenging to fit it into the curriculum.

Standing up in front of a classroom delivering a lesson is still the main focus of teacher educational programs and many pre-service teachers are not in the classroom the first week of school. Therefore, they miss how the mentor teacher introduces her/himself to the families at back to school night. These problems could explain why so many first or second year teachers struggle when it comes time to communicate with the parents or community. So how do these new teachers get the help they need?

There are certain content areas that would benefit both pre-service and in-service educators. Professional development is one answer to this problem. Critical content areas might include the following:

- Presentations of techniques for involving parents.
- Discussions on different types of parent involvement.
- Approaches on how to get parents involved (i.e. home visits).
- Appropriate parent involvement for elementary, junior, and senior high.
- Teacher communication skills both in and out of conference situations.
Teacher knowledge of family support services in the community.

Discussion on types of parent involvement strategies that work best with families of varying socioeconomic status and ethnicity (Flanigan, 2005).

The value of parent involvement should be communicated to teachers getting ready to enter the field, along with potential difficulties that may be encountered.

The Albuquerque Public Schools Parent Center decided to train school staff and undergraduate education majors regarding parent involvement, as well as offer training to parents in the community as well. The program parent training covers topics such as supporting school learning at home, how to get the most out of a parent teacher conference, and working together with educators. After educators and parents attended these workshops, many saw the communication between home and schools flourish. Parents felt more comfortable with coming to school, sharing ideas and expressing concerns.

Many schools are realizing their new teachers come out with a strong curriculum base, but lack knowledge in how to communicate with their students’ families. Research has shown that strengthening the relationship between schools and families helps the child to succeed (Reali & Trancredi, 2002). Districts have begun to recognize through the help of the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program that they must support their new teachers with professional development opportunities in order for them to successfully communicate with families. One example of this type of training is helping educators learn how to do successful home visits. The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) in Sacramento has been conducting trainings since 1999 on how to connect
teachers with families at their home. Their approach is now being used in hundreds of schools in six states (Jehlen, 2009). The non-profit organization offers three different types of trainings:

- Parents and Teachers as Co-Educators. This interactive training introduces how to do a home visit, history behind the organization, research, steps one must take to set up a home visit, and addresses likely barriers to building effective relationships between parents and teachers as co-educators.
- Increasing Knowledge and Capacity. This training focuses on sharing information about a child’s academic strengths and challenges. It prepares teachers with a “tool kit” to boost parent capacity in order to help their child academically.
- Creating Systems Change. This training is designed to work with educators to strategize about changes in the school and at home to insure that parents and teachers are recognized and supported as co-educators.

According to the PTHVP’s (2005) research, many teachers and school districts have found the training to be very helpful for teachers with many different levels of experience. Educators appreciated the different professional development trainings and the opportunity to reflect on what they learned during a home visit. Teachers also enjoyed the chance to develop their skills on how to communicate with families, especially families who spoke another language. All the trainings provide time for the teachers to role-play how they would make the first call to a family. During the PTHVP professional development opportunities, the trainers advise educators to not only visit the students in
trouble because that puts a stigma on getting other visits. The trainers also recommend being flexible when doing a first visit, suggesting late afternoons and offering alternatives other than meeting at the home, like a local coffee shop or library. They suggest not pulling out any papers during the first visit and to expect the visit to last 30 to 45 minutes. The trainings also provide time for educators to practice what type of questions they might ask when they got there. “Find out whether the parents have other children in school. What’s been their experience in schools up until now” (Jehlen, 2009, p. 42)? Most found the professional development useful when taking the first steps to establish a positive relationship with a family who might not have had such a positive experience in the past with the educational system.

Researcher, David Williams (2002) found that promising programs like the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project, made training available for both staff and parents consistently throughout the year. Schools that sponsored workshops for both parents and teachers found success for all, which in the end, translated into success for the students.

Rationale of the Study

Peralta-Nash’s (2003) findings as well as those of others validate the strong impact home visits have on parent engagement, academics and school discipline. Projects like the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (2005) empower parents to get involved in their child’s education. Mapp (2003) proved in her research that home visits made parents feel like they belonged and in return students felt more success at home and at school.
The rationale for this study was to examine the type of impact home visits have on a school and the home. In the Review of the Related Literature, the research suggested that conducting home visits produced a positive outcome for both the school and the home. Studies such as these are essential because they provide valid data for non-profit groups like the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project and allow them to show evidence that their model is working. These studies are also significant for the area of professional development because the research provides solid evidence that more work needs to be done in regards to reaching out to families and home visits is a perfect way to start.

Summary

The literature review in Chapter Two clearly demonstrated that conducting home visits produces many positive educational results. For example, research has proven that home visits increase grades and test scores, better school attendance, higher graduation rates, and more positive attitudes (Mapp, 2003). Parents also reported in Mapp’s (2003) research how the home visit made them feel welcomed, which in return created a sense of belonging. The home visits also made the families feel honored, respected, and recognized as someone who was supporting their child to succeed in the education process. The families also reported feeling connected to the school community more than they had in the past.

Why do more schools or educators not attempt them? The teaching profession can be a very overwhelming profession, especially when first starting. Doing home visits takes planning and training and many teachers already feel overcommitted to their job in
the classroom, along with the many school committees they sign up for. Also, home visits have to be done outside the normal paid school hours, which make it very hard for some teachers to fit them in. However, like any new project, there are going to be obstacles in the way or excuses as to why something can not be done, but if a school is struggling to find the answers on how to get parents connected, raise test scores, and/or lower behavior problems, home visit programs and trainings are definitely something to investigate.

Furger (2002) stated in her research, “Throughout the 1998-99 school year, teachers in nine Sacramento schools made three thousand home visits. The result was greater parent participation, fewer behavior problems, and continuous improvements on the state-mandated standardized tests” (Furger, 2002, p. 3). Considering the positive results, many other schools in the Sacramento City Unified School District are now starting to try home visit programs as well. In fact, based on the great success of these schools in Sacramento, California has offered $15 million in grants for school districts throughout the state who are interested in implementing home visit programs.

Home visits will not be successful for a classroom or a school if the teachers do not feel comfortable or prepared to do them. If a school is planning to start doing home visits, they must have the majority of the teachers involved or the program will not reach its full potential. Parents will talk and those who are not visited will feel cheated and perhaps even more disillusioned by the educational system. In order for a home visit program to work well, many things must be arranged: there must be motivated teachers, a school/community eager to improve their schools by building community involvement and support, and there must be adequate training for the school staff so they feel
comfortable stepping into a student’s home. It also helps to have administrative and
district support when starting a new project that involves the school and the community,
and in the beginning it helps to have money for the project, but is definitely not a
necessity in the end. After doing home visits, many schools found the process to be so
successful and fulfilling that even after the grant money ran out, they continued to do
home visits. In fact, many teachers found their job in the classroom to be much more
rewarding and enjoyable not because they had the best bulletin board in the school, but
because they had made a personal connection with many of their students and their
families through doing home visits. In the end, parents felt welcomed, listened to,
honored and valued. A bridge – via the school and the parents - can be built through
home visits with the final result being a successful and happy child.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Setting of the Study

The study took place in a city in Northern California, in a diverse unified school district of over 40,000 students. All schools involved were Title I schools with varying populations. There were twenty-three elementary schools, five middle schools, and three high schools studied. The researcher chose one elementary school at random to conduct two questionnaires and a final questionnaire was sent out to all thirty-one schools involved with the home visit program.

Population and Sample

When conducting research on the impact of home visits the researcher first took into account the entire student body at ABC Elementary School. The elementary school was a small school with a diverse population of 321 students. The school population was a mix of four cultures, Hispanic, Hmong, African American and Caucasian. The researcher then included the faculty and staff at the elementary school. The school staff was less diverse, two teachers are Hispanic, one teacher is Hmong, and the rest were Caucasian. Finally, when conducting the third survey the researcher examined thirty-three schools in a particular Northern California School district all took part in the Nell Soto Home Visit Grant. Ethnic make-up is unknown because the survey was sent out via e-mail.
The sample was collected from the first through fourth grade classes at ABC elementary school. There were four classes total, three classes had twenty students each and one class had thirty-three students. The study was narrowed down to just first through fourth grade parents in order to follow those classes over two years. The second sample also included the entire faculty and staff at ABC Elementary. There were a total of eighteen staff members who filled out the survey. Finally, the third sample collected consisted of survey results from all the home visit coordinators whose schools were involved with the Nell Soto Grant. The last survey was passed out to thirty-three home visit site coordinators from around the district.

Data Collection

A cover letter and questionnaire (Appendix A) was passed out to all faculty at a staff meeting. Teachers were asked to keep the survey anonymous and put the questionnaire back in the researcher’s mailbox by the end of the next day. The teachers had a limited time filling out the questionnaire, therefore ensuring that most questionnaires will be returned and not forgotten. The second source, a parent questionnaire, was sent home with a cover letter (Appendix B). It was passed out and then collected by classroom teachers. The teachers then returned the completed surveys to the researcher’s box. The teachers had a week to return the questionnaires back to the researcher. The third survey (Appendix C) was circulated via e-mail and was not anonymous because the school site coordinator was asked to state the name of their school. The researcher also needed to know if their school wished to participate in home
visits in the future. The school site coordinators had three weeks to fill out the survey and return it via e-mail.

Instrumentation

The research for this study was qualitative; relying primarily on three questionnaires, interviews, and a review of the literature. There were three instruments used in conducting this research. The funnel approach was used for the majority of this study. The researcher started with a more general approach to the questions and then as the data was collected and analyzed the researcher began to fine tune questions.

The first source was an anonymous questionnaire (Appendix B) passed out to the entire faculty and staff at ABC Elementary School. The survey consisted of twelve questions. The first couple of questions were more general. For example, “How many years have you been working at ABC Elementary School?” The questions then became more focused on the topic. For example, “Do you have an interest in attending a home visit training program?” All questions were clear, precise and relatively short. There was one open-ended question at the end of the survey.

The second source was a different questionnaire (Appendix B) passed out to the parents/guardians of all first through fourth graders who attended ABC Elementary School. The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out if the parents at ABC Elementary School were interested in learning more about a home visit program. Similar to the teacher questionnaire, the parent questionnaire started off with more general questions in the beginning. For example, “How many years has your child attended ABC Elementary School?” Towards the end of the questionnaire the questions became more
focused on the researcher’s proposal; a home visit program. Again, just like the first source, there was an open-ended question at the end. Finally, a third questionnaire (Appendix B) was circulated to all schools involved with the Nell Soto Grant. The home visit site coordinator answered the survey based on his/her knowledge of how the Nell Soto Grant was used at their school. Again, the questionnaire started with general questions like, “What grade level site do you work at?” Then moved to questions more focused on the Grant itself, “How many teachers actively done home visits?” At the end of the survey, the schools were asked if their site was interested in continuing home visits in the future, if so, what training did they wish to receive?

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher analyzed the data by first numbering all questionnaires collected. The purpose of doing this was to keep an accurate record of everything collected. Once the questionnaires were all numbered, the researcher recorded all data from the faculty and parent surveys on two master tables (Appendix C). All open-ended questions were recorded verbatim. From the information gathered, bar graphs were developed to represent certain responses in order to help the researcher evaluate any common trends. The third survey was collected via Zoomerang, an online database. The research was collected and the data was broken down by each question and bar graphs were created.

Limitations

While conducting the surveys, the researcher found all of the faculty and staff at ABC Elementary School to be very cooperative. During the investigation of this thesis
the researcher experienced the following limitations. The first limitation was finding a willing participant to translate the survey from English into Spanish. The second limitation the researcher found was distributing the parent survey. The third limitation was convincing all the parents to return the survey. The fourth limitation was the narrow scope of the study. Only one district was used to research the impact home visits were having on schools. Finally, the last limitation the researcher encountered was finding the most efficient way to distribute the third survey to all schools involved with the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project. The survey was to be distributed during the final month of the school year and the schools were given a two-week deadline to return the information. All schools involved were extremely busy and many home visit coordinators were feeling multiple demands.
Chapter 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter will present the actual data collected and analyzed. The data presented in Chapter 4 is the result of three surveys sent out to various faculty, parents, and home visit coordinators at different schools throughout a school district in Northern California.

Data Analysis

*Home Visit Staff Survey*

Question 1 asked participants how many years they had been working at ABC Elementary School.

![Figure 1: Number of Years at ABC Elementary School](image-url)
The most frequently selected choice was “1-5 years”, at eight staff members. The majority of the faculty at ABC Elementary School had been working there between one and ten years.

Question 2 asked the participants if they felt there was a need for more parent volunteers at the elementary school.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 2 - Do You Feel We Need More Parent Volunteers at ABC School?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes 100% (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 0% (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The choice among the faculty was unanimous; One hundred percent of the faculty thought there was a need for more parent volunteers on campus.

Question 3 asked the participants their opinion on whether or not there was a discipline problem at the elementary school.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 3 - Do You Feel there is a Discipline Problem at ABC School?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Yes, it has gotten worse 0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. No, there is no problem 11% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Yes, the problem has stayed the same 89% (16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequently selected choice was “yes the problem has stayed the same” as 89% of the responses stated the discipline problem continues to remain the same at the elementary school.
Question 4 asked participants if they felt there was an attendance problem at the elementary school.

Figure 2 Attendance Problem

The most frequently selected choice was “yes, there is an attendance problem” as 56% of the responses.

Question 5 asked participants if they felt there was a disconnect among the students and staff at ABC School.

Figure 3 Disconnect Among Students and Staff
The most frequently selected choice was “among certain groups” at 39%. Many of the participants who answered “among certain groups” wrote in they felt the two groups with the biggest disconnect were among the African-American and Hmong students. Question 6 asked the participants if they felt there was a disconnect among parents and staff at the Elementary School.

Figure 4 Disconnect Among Parents and Staff

The most frequently selected choice was “among certain groups” at 56%. More than half of the respondents felt certain groups were disconnected from the school.

Question 7 asked in the staff’s opinion, did they think a home visit program would help address some of the problems at the Elementary School.
In Question 7, every single response stated that a home visit program would either “more than likely help” at 56%, or “possibly help” at 44%. Not one response came back stating there was no need for a home visit program.

Question 8 asked the participants if they felt there was a need at the Elementary School to learn more about the home visit process.

Table 3

Question 8 - Do You feel there is a Need at ABC Elementary School to Learn More about the Home Visit Process?

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every survey returned felt there was definitely a need for the school to learn more about the home visit process.

Question 9 asked the participants if they had an interest themselves in learning more about the home visit process.
Table 4

Question 9 - Do You Have an Interest in Learning More about the Home Visit Process?

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The question elicited a very large “yes” response, at 94%. The majority of the staff at the Elementary School had a strong interest in learning more about the home visit process.

Question 10 asked the participants if they would be interested in learning how to do a home visit.

Table 5

Question 10 - Would You be Interested in Learning How to Do a Home Visit?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequently selected choice was “yes” at 94%. A majority of the faculty at the Elementary School was interested in learning how to do a home visit.

Question 11 asked the participants if they would be interested in attending home visit training.
The most frequently selected choice was “yes” at 72%, while 28% stated they were interested only if the training was done at the Elementary School.

Question 12 asked if there was anything else they would like to add. Some comments included the following:

- “In regard to our discipline issues, I feel that this is improving but will be a continuing process for the year ahead.”
- “I have done home visits at other school sites. It is well documented to work in many areas.”
- “It seems like there is an improvement this year when it comes to discipline.”
- “The discipline problem is being handled 100% better this year.”
- “Home visits are helpful but not a miracle cure. Many teachers have families of their own who can be neglected at the expense of a lot of extra time added on to the extra time we already spend. I think that impact can be overlooked.”

*Parent Survey*
Question 1 asked the participants if they had more than one child at the elementary school.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1 - Do You Have More Than One Child at ABC School?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the participants (58%) had more than one child at the elementary school. In fact, many of the people surveyed responded by saying they had more than two students at the elementary school.

Question 2 asked the participants what grade their child or children were in at the elementary school.

Figure 7 What Grade is Your Child In?
The majority of participants (42) had students in either the second or third grade at the elementary school. The lowest result from the survey was kindergarten and first grade with only 18 of the participants with children in those two grades.

Question 3 asked participants how long their children had been attending the elementary school.

Figure 8 Years at ABC School

The majority of participants (37 in the two to four years category and three in the four to six years category) have attended the elementary school for more than two years.

Question 4 asked the participants if they attended back to school night.

Table 7

Question 4 - Did You Attend Back to School Night this Year?

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>76% (54)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24% (17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the participants attended back to school night at the elementary school for one or more than one of their children.
Question 5 asked the participants if they have spoken or met with their child’s teacher.

Table 8

Question 5 - Have You Spoken with or Met Your Child’s Teacher Yet?

<p>| | |</p>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>77% (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23% (16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, this question elicited a response that the majority of adults who participated in the survey had either spoken with or met their child’s teacher within the first two months of school.

Question 6 asked the participants if they felt informed about what was going on at ABC School.

Table 9

Question 4 - Do You Feel Like You Know What is Happening at ABC School?

<p>| | |</p>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>68% (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>25% (18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the participants felt either very informed or somewhat informed about what was taking place at their child’s school.

Question 7 asked the participating adults how they receive their information about what is happening at the school.
This question elicited a very mixed response. Many participants chose several answers on how they stayed informed. The most popular answer was “the child tells me”, with 49 of the participants choosing that response.

Question 8 asked the participants the importance of parent teacher conferences. Table 10

Question 8 - How Important are Parent Teacher Conferences to You?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>92% (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Important</td>
<td>4% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>4% (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An overwhelming majority of adults who participated in the survey (92%) responded saying parent teacher conferences were “very important” in their child’s education.

Question Nine asked the participants if they would circle all of the following ways they would like to get involved in their child’s education.
The responses to this question were very mixed. However, the majority (29) responded that “helping in the classroom” was the easiest way for them to get involved. “Chaperoning on fieldtrips” was the second most popular answer with (19) of the participants responding to that choice. The lowest response was “volunteering at recess” with only six participants choosing that response.

The next two questions had to do with the school’s PTA. Question 9 asked if the participant was involved in the school’s PTA.

Table 11

| Question 9 - Are You Involved in the School’s PTA? |
|-----------------|-------|
| Yes             | 13% (9) |
| No              | 87% (62) |

An overwhelming majority (87%) of the surveys that came back were not involved in the PTA at the elementary school.

Question 10 was a follow-up to Question 9 asking the participants if they were not involved in the PTA, would they like to be.
Table 12

Question 10 - If You are Not Involved, Would You Like to Join the School PTA?

<p>| | | |</p>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>(14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>(49)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of the respondents who were not involved in the PTA did not plan on joining during this school year.

Question 11 focused on meeting with the child’s teacher. The question asked the participants if they would be willing to meet with their child’s teacher outside of school.

Figure 11 Meeting with the Teacher Outside of School

Many of the participants were willing to explore the idea of meeting with the teacher outside of school (33), said “yes” they were open to meeting either at their home or somewhere else besides school. A close second, (28) responded “need more information” but required more information before making a final decision.

Question 12 was the last question on the survey and it asked the participants if they had any additional comments. Some of the comments included the following:
• “There have been some new and exciting changes this year. My child is more involved and active in her school and personal growth. Thank you!”

• “When I was a teacher I did not want to do home visits. I needed my private life.”

• “I work all the time, but I’m very interested in my child’s well being. I will visit the school when time permits.”

• “We have wonderful and helpful teachers here. I appreciate their time and attention to my son.”

• “Thanks for caring.”

• “I am very concerned about school bullies and what is done about the problem if it should occur at the school.”

• “The crosswalk area seems to be very congested with parents parking in it. There should be a crossing guard on duty at 8am too!”

• “I have seen positive changes this year.”

• “We are looking forward to meeting the teacher.”

• “Anything I can do to help at home because I have a little one.”

• “We want to thank you for helping the kids at school.”
Questions 1 through 3 asked the coordinators to identify their school site. In total, there were 23 elementary schools, five middle schools, and three high schools. The fourth question focused on what level the site coordinator taught.

Table 13

Question 4 - What Level Do You Teach?

a. Elementary/K-8 22% (14)  
b. Middle School 17% (5)  
c. High School 10% (3)

One school did not respond to this question.

Question Five asked what percentage of the school’s teachers had been trained to do home visits.

Figure 12 The Percentage of Teachers Who Were Trained

The majority of schools (78%) responded to Question 5 by either choosing 50-75% or selecting 75-100%. Very few schools (22%) had less than half their staffs trained to do home visits.
Question 6 focused on teachers actively doing home visits.

Figure 13 Teachers Who Actively Did Home Visits

Question 6 did not have a majority answer: six schools (19%) out of 31 total said their teachers had actively done home visits. Nine schools (28%) responded by choosing the second choice of 25-50%. Eight schools (25%) claimed to have 50-75% of their teachers actively doing home visits, and nine schools (28%) said they had 75-100% actively conducting home visits.

Question 7 asked what type of materials the teacher brought on the home visit.

Figure 14 Materials Brought Along on Home Visits
In Question 7, teachers were able to choose more than one answer. Fourteen teachers (47%), responded saying they brought a Language Arts toolkit, nine teachers (30%) responded they brought Math toolkits, and fourteen (47%) responded to bringing a book to the student when visiting them at their home. The last response was entitled “other” and teachers were asked to please specify what else they brought on their home visits. Nineteen teachers (63%) chose “other” as their answer. The responses included flyers on upcoming events, dictionaries, resource brochures, homework kits, writing practice, CST information, Healthy Start information, and hygiene information.

Question 8 asked approximately how many home-visits took place at their site.

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Many Home Visits Took Place at Your Site Under the Nell Soto Parent Teacher Involvement Grant.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. 0-100</td>
<td>35% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 100-200</td>
<td>32% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 200-300</td>
<td>13% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. &gt;300</td>
<td>10% (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 9 focused on changes that could be attributed to the home visit project.
Question 9 allowed teachers to again respond to more than one answer. The top three responses to this question were “parent participation” with 22 responses at 71%, academics with 21 responses at 68%, and attendance with 20 responses at 65%. The next answer with the biggest response was “decrease in discipline problems” with 18 responses at 58%, followed up by decrease in transience rate with six responses at 19%, and finally “other attributes” with six responses at 19%. Some of the “other” responses included:

- overall relationships improved,
- closeness to the student visited occurred,
- more parents on campus, and,
- the teacher/parent/child relationship and communication improved.

Question 10 asked if the school sites were interested in continuing home visits in the future.
Question 10 - Is Your Site Interested in Continuing Home Visits in the Future?

a. Yes 97% (31)

b. No 3% (1)

Question 11 focused mainly on how prepared teachers felt doing home visits.

Question 11 - Do You Feel Your Faculty was Prepared to do Home Visits?

a. yes-felt prepared 75% (24)

b. did not feel prepared 3% (1)

c. somewhat prepared 22% (7)

Question 12 asked the schools if they would like more training in the future regarding home visits.

Question 12 - Would your Faculty Like More Training Regarding Home Visits?

a. yes 34% (11)

b. no 9% (3)

c. not sure 25% (8)

d. depends on training 34% (11)

This question elicited a very evenly distributed response regarding training in the future. Most schools seemed open to the future training, but it depended on what type.

Question 13 asked what type of training would the schools like in the future.
The responses for Question 13 had two answers that were the most popular: engaging with diverse families; 21 out of 31 schools chose that response at 66%. The other most frequently selected answer was information on community resources available; 21 out of 31 schools chose that answer at 66%. Two schools chose “other” as their response. The schools specified other trainings they would like to see would be Waldorf inspired parenting classes and home visits that require interpreters.

Findings

After reviewing the results of all three questionnaires, it is evident that the vast majority of schools were positively impacted from conducting home visits. In addition, from the data collected from the teacher questionnaire, the majority of parents welcomed the idea of a home visit.

The data collected and analyzed from the teacher surveys confirmed several different trends presented by the faculty at ABC Elementary School.
• One strong trend was the need/interest among the faculty to learn more about the home visit process and receive training in the area.

• Many teachers felt there was discipline problem at the school, but many teachers felt it was starting to get better.

• One hundred percent of the faculty wanted to learn more about the home visit process.

The second survey was the school survey and they were passed out to the parents via their child’s classroom teacher. All surveys were anonymous. One hundred percent of the surveys collected were used as data and analyzed. The data collected and analyzed from the school questionnaire demonstrated several different trends presented by the parents at the Elementary School.

• One positive response was many parents had either attended back to school night, met or spoken with the teacher or had done both.

• Another positive trend was the understanding of the importance of parent teacher conferences.

• One negative result was the lack of parent involvement in the school’s PTA. Many parents were not a part of the PTA and did not plan on joining either.

• Finally, one last significant trend was the willingness to either participate or learn more about a home visit program at the school.

The third survey was passed out via e-mail and the responses were collected electronically. There were thirty-one schools surveyed and each school had two weeks to respond. All surveys were in English and 100 percent of the information collected was
used for data and analysis. The data was collected and tallied through a computer program called Zoomerang. All responses were recorded and used for analysis. Many positive outcomes were discovered through analyzing the data for example:

- The majority of schools saw positive outcomes with home visits.
- Ninety-seven percent of the schools would like to continue conducting home visits.
- Fifty-nine percent of the schools would like more professional development regarding home visits and 34% said it depended on the type of training.
- More than half the schools attributed home visits to raising test scores, increasing attendance, helping with parent participation and decreasing discipline problems.

In conclusion, all three surveys provided the researcher solid evidence that home visits work.
Chapter 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine two key areas of home visit impact. The first area examined was the different types of impact home visits had on a school. The second area examined was what districts can professionally do to help their teachers conduct the visits. The study set out to answer the following questions:

4. Do home visits make a difference in the relationship between home and school?
5. What impact do home visits have on attendance, academics and discipline?
6. What can districts do in the way of professional development to help educators conduct successful home visits?

After a review of the literature, three various questionnaires were passed out to teachers, a sampling of parents, and to 33 home visit school site coordinators in an urban school district in Northern California. All questionnaires were returned and analyzed, but limited to one school district. Also, the entire group of parents and teachers participating in the Home Visit Project was not surveyed; therefore not reflecting the entire teacher population. After analyzing all data retrieved, information was recorded and put into various graphs and figures. Results were then recorded with the intent to examine how well the three initial questions were answered.
Conclusions

Overall, the research has documented that home visits make a strong positive impact on the relationship between the home and school. In Chapter 2, the Review of the Literature clearly stated success is achieved when the home and the school communicate and become partners. Long (2007) wrote that sometimes, all it took to break a long-standing cultural, language, or socioeconomic barrier, was an invitation from the school to help. Peralta-Nash (2003) emphasized the importance of including the parents in the educational decision-making process. Listening to the parents and working with them instead of against them, helps to provide success for the child.

The Literature in Chapter 2 documented how positive home visits made the families feel welcomed, honored and respected and in return, the families became more active in the school. The Review of the Literature found that when schools work with parents, everyone involved benefits. When parents are listened to and treated as the expert about their child, a relationship is built and trust is established. Home visits help make connections, therefore resulting in partnerships between teachers and parents with the ultimate goal of success for each child. Furger (2002) saw these exact results in her research, with nine Sacramento schools. Now, these nine schools have expanded into thirty-three schools conducting home visits and even though the Nell Soto Grant money is gone, all but one school plans on continuing home visits.

The Literature Review in Chapter 2 also clearly stated the positive impact home visits have on academics and school management. Many researchers like Goodwin and Judd (2005) and Davies et al. (2007) documented in their research that home visits
attributed to rising test scores. When a family was engaged in the child’s learning, student achievement rose. Home visits provided teachers the opportunity to see what was already being done at the home and then introduced new ideas to the family to help support the skills a child can learn at home.

Another positive impact the Review of the Literature documented was a decrease in discipline problems. Dryfoos (1996) found with the connection of home and school, property destruction and graffiti began to diminish. Delisio (2006) stated in her research that after home visits were completed, suspension rates decreased and students became more focused in class. Epstein and Sheldon (2002) found in research that with the help of home visits, truancy and absenteeism went down. Schools reached out to chronically absent students and established a relationship of trust and attendance went up.

Finally, the Review of the Literature also focused on what is being done professionally regarding home visits. Many teacher credentialing programs are encouraging students to build home-school relationships. A few programs like the one at the University of Maine have their professors leading as examples and have them conducting home visits with their students. In Albuquerque Public Schools, teachers, parents and education majors are all in training together focusing on communication between the home and school. In Sacramento, The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project trains teachers throughout the year on how to conduct a home visit. They offer three types of trainings to help prepare the teacher when doing home visits. The literature clearly stated professional development was extremely useful for educators who were taking the first steps and setting up home visits. Currently, the problem is how schools continue to
grow professionally once the educator has begun conducting home visits and no longer needs the beginning trainings.

Not only did the literature state positive impacts from home visits, but the teachers, and site coordinators surveyed documented positive results, too. The majority of teachers (94 percent) and parents (61 percent) surveyed, wanted to participate in a home visit project. In the schools who were actively conducting home visits, most of the respondents (71 percent) claimed home visits were working to get parents more engaged on campus. Again, a majority of the respondents (68 percent) cited home visits helped raise their schools test scores, increase their attendance, and decrease their discipline problems. In addition, it was quite clear from the questionnaire results that schools wanted to continue doing home visits and would appreciate future professional development opportunities. Many educators (78 percent) felt they had received enough training on how to conduct a home visit and were ready for the next step in their professional development. For example, many school site coordinators wanted the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project to provide a training where educators could receive information on what resources were out there to help families in need.

Recommendations

Facts from the Review of the Literature in Chapter 2 and the results from the questionnaires, document that home visits positively benefit both the school and the home. One recommendation would be to further investigate what other districts who conduct home visits are doing and to examine what is working successfully within that
district. This comparison and contrast of the data would be important to observe how other districts around the nation are keeping their home visit programs running.

Another recommendation would be to investigate how to provide compensation for teachers and administrators who are actively doing home visits. In California, the time frame for the Nell Soto Grant money has run out. In the future, how are districts going to pay their teachers and administrators for conducting home visits? This problem needs to be examined because many teachers already work overtime with no extra pay. What can districts and the state legislators do to fix this problem?

Finally, the last recommendation focuses on professional development. Respondents strongly replied they are interested in receiving training for home visits in the following two areas: engaging with diverse families and information on community resources available to help when doing a home visit. Even though many teachers are already trained, that training should not disappear. However, The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project needs to research how to expand their project so teachers can continue growing professionally on the topic of home visits and will want to continue to conduct them and make a positive change for their school.
Appendices
Appendix A

Consent to Participate in Research
Consent to Participate in Research
At an Elementary School in Sacramento

You are being asked to participate in research, which will be conducted by Lisa Levasseur, teacher and graduate student in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at California State University, Sacramento. The Department of Education supports the practice of informed consent and protection for subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you would like to participate in the present study.

The purpose of this project is to develop a program to demonstrate how to do a successful home visit at an elementary school in Sacramento.

You will be asked to fill out the attached survey of questions about parent involvement at the school and the relationships between teachers and parents.

The information gathered from this survey is important since it will represent a sampling of teacher opinions on the how our elementary school is doing in regards to parent support and determine whether or not a home visit program is needed.

Your participation is solicited, but strictly voluntary. The researcher assures you that all surveys will remain anonymous.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact Lisa Levasseur at (916) 433-5420, or by e-mail at lisa-levasseur@scusd.k12.ca.us

Thank you very much for your support. I appreciate your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Lisa Levasseur
Teacher/Graduate Student
Consent to Participate in Research

At an Elementary School in Sacramento

You are being asked to participate in research, which will be conducted by Lisa Levasseur, teacher and graduate student in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at California State University, Sacramento. The Department of Education supports the practice of informed consent and protection for subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you would like to participate in the present study.

The purpose of this project is to develop a program to demonstrate how to do a successful home visit at an elementary school in Sacramento.

You will be asked to fill out the attached survey of questions about the importance of parent involvement at the school and the relationships between teachers and parents.

The information gathered from this survey is important since it will represent a sampling of parent opinions on the how our elementary school is doing in regards to meeting you and your child’s needs. The survey will also help the school determine whether or not a home visit program is needed to help make your child successful at school.

Your participation is solicited, but strictly voluntary. The researcher assures you that all surveys will remain anonymous.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact Lisa Levasseur at (916) 433-5420, or by e-mail at lisa-levasseur@scusd.k12.ca.us

Thank you very much for your support. I appreciate your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Lisa Levasseur
Teacher/Graduate Student
Appendix B

Surveys
Home Visit Staff Survey

1. How long have you been working at ABC School?
   a. 1-5 years   b. 5-10 years   c. 10 plus years

2. Do you feel we need more parent volunteers at ABC School?
   a. Yes        b. No

3. Do you feel there is a discipline problem at ABC School?
   a. Yes, it has gotten worse   b. No, there is no problem   c. Yes, the problem has stayed the same.

4. Do you feel there is an attendance problem at ABC School?
   a. Yes   b. No   c. Possibly

5. Do you feel there is a disconnect among the students and staff at ABC School?
   a. Yes   b. No   c. Among certain groups __________________

6. Do you feel there is a disconnect among parents and staff at ABC School?
   a. Yes   b. No   c. Among certain groups __________________

7. In your opinion, would a home visit program help address some of the above problems?
   a. More than likely   b. Possibly   c. Not likely

8. Do you feel there is a need at ABC School to learn more about the home visit process?
   a. Yes   b. No

9. Do you have an interest in learning more about the home visit process?
   a. Yes   b. No

10. Would you be interested in learning how to do a home visit?
    a. Yes   b. No
11. Would you be interested in attending a home visit training?
   a. Yes  b. No  c. Yes, if at school, only

12. Anything you would like to add?

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________
School Parent Survey

Please fill out and return to your child’s teacher. Thank you!

1. Do you have more than one child at ABC School?
   A. Yes  b. No

2. What grade(s) is your child in at ABC School?
   a. k-1  b. 2-3  c. 4-6

3. How many years has your child attended ABC School?
   a. First year here  b. 2-4 years  c. More than 5 years

4. Did you attend back to school night this year?
   a. Yes  b. No

5. Have you spoke with or met your child’s teacher yet?
   a. Yes  b. No

6. Do you feel like you know what is happening at ABC School?
   a. Yes  b. No  c. Sometimes

7. Where do you get your information about what is going on at ABC School?
   a. My child tells me  b. The Birney Bobcat  c. Classroom newsletter
   d. Somewhere else_________________

8. How important are parent teacher conferences to you?
   a. Very important  b. Somewhat important  c. Not important

9. Are you involved in the school’s PTA?
   a. Yes  b. No

10. If no, would you like to join the school PTA?
    a. Yes  b. No
11. Would you be willing to meet with your child’s teacher outside of school; for example, at your home or at the public library?
   a. Yes  b. No  c. Maybe, I would need more information

12. Any additional comments you would like to add:

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
Home Visit District Survey

Please circle the answer that best applies to your school site and then return it by June 5th via e-mail.

1. Please identify your Elementary Site:
   a. [Blank]

2. Please identify your Middle School Site:
   a. [Blank]

3. Please identify your High School Site:
   a. [Blank]

4. What level do you teach?
   a. Elementary/K-8  b. Middle School  c. High School

5. What percentages of your teachers have been trained to do home visits?
   a. 0-25%  b. 25-50%  c. 50-75%  d. 75-100%

6. How many teachers have actively done home visits?
   a. 0-25%  b. 25-50%  c. 50-75%  d. 75-100%

7. If you brought materials on your home visit what were they?

8. Approximately how many home visits took place at your site under the Nell Soto Parent Teacher Involvement Grant?
   a. 0-100  b. 100-200  c. 200-300  d. >300(#?___________)

9. Has your school noticed any progress in the following areas connected to home visits? Please circle any that apply.
10. Is your site interested in continuing home visits in the future?
   a. Yes  
   b. No  
   c. If no, why not? ____________________

11. Do you feel your faculty was prepared to do home visits?
   a. Yes  
   b. No, Why not? ____________________
   c. Somewhat  
   d. Other ____________________

12. Would your faculty like more training (Professional Development) regarding
   home visits?
   a. Yes  
   b. No  
   c. Not Sure  
   d. Depends on the training

13. What type of training would you like PTHVP to offer in the future?
   a. Engaging with diverse families
   b. Differentiated instruction after the home visit
   c. Home visits for high school educators
   d. Information on community resources available
   e. Other ____________________
Appendix C

Survey Results
Spreadsheet for Home Visit Staff Survey

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Question 12 additional comments:

- “In regard to our discipline issues, I feel that this is improving but will be a continuing process for the year ahead.”
- “I have done home visits at other school sites. It is well documented to work in many areas.”
- “It seems like there is an improvement this year when it comes to discipline.”
- “The discipline problem is being handled a 100% better this year.”
- “Home visits are helpful but not a miracle cure. Many teachers have families of their own who can be neglected at the expense of a lot of extra time added on to the extra time we already spend. I think that impact can be overlooked.”
Spreadsheet of School Parent Survey Responses

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Question 13 open-ended comments:

- “There have been some new and exciting changes this year. My child is more involved and active in her school and personal growth. Thank you!”
- “When I was a teacher I did not want to do home visits. I needed my private life”
- “I work all the time, but I’m very interested in my child’s well being. I will visit the school when time permits.”
- “We have wonderful and helpful teachers here. I appreciate their time and attention to my son.”
- “Thanks for caring.”
- “I am very concerned about school bullies and what is done about the problem if it should occur at the school.”
- “The crosswalk area seems to be very congested with parents parking in it. There should be a crossing guard on duty at 8am too!”
- “I have seen positive changes this year.”
- “We are looking forward to meeting the teacher.”
- “Anything I can do to help at home because I have a little one.”
- “We want to thank you for helping the kids at school.”
Spreadsheet for Home Visit District Survey Responses

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