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Establishing genuine parent/teacher partnerships : a home visit approach

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Establishing genuine parent/teacher partnerships : a home visit approach

Abstract

This article is based on a teacher's personal experience with home visits and the feedback she received from parents. The home visits allowed the teacher to have a holistic view of students and their families. Quotes from an on-going journal convey a deepened relationship between the teacher and her parents. The goals of the home visits were to gain a deeper understanding of the children as readers, and communicate the child's developmental progress to the parents. Another goal was to understand parent perceptions toward home visitations, and build a parent/teacher partnership based on mutual respect. The results section of the paper is organized into three sections. The first section shares the students' responses; the second section explains the parents' responses; and last, the teacher's impressions of home visits are described.

Establishing Genuine Parent/Teacher Partnerships:

A Home Visit Approach

A Graduate Journal Article

Submitted to the

Division of Reading Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

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by

Kimberly Jo Foy

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Dear RT Editors,

The enclosed article titled, *Establishing Genuine Parent/Teacher Partnerships: A Home Visit Approach* is being submitted to you for review. The article is based on my personal experience with home visitations and the feedback I received from parents. The purpose of my research was to build a partnership with parents through home visits in order to provide their child with the reading assistance. The information in the article is based on a parent questionnaire and an on-going journal of the home visits. I feel the information in this article would benefit teachers who would like to begin, or are currently implementing home visits. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Kimberly J. Foy

Running Head: ESTABLISHING GENUINE PARTNERSHIPS

Establishing Genuine Parent/Teacher Partnerships:
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Abstract

This article titled, *Establishing Genuine Parent/Teacher Partnerships: A Home Visit Approach*, is based on a teacher's personal experience with home visits and the feedback she received from parents. The home visits allowed the teacher to have a holistic view of students and their families. Quotes from an on-going journal convey a deepened relationship between the teacher and her parents. The goals of the home visits were to gain a deeper understanding of the children as readers and communicate the child's developmental progress to the parents. Another goal was to understand parent perceptions toward home visitations and build a parent/teacher partnership based on mutual respect. The results section of the paper is organized into three sections. The first section shares the students' responses; the second section explains the parents' responses; and last, the teacher's impressions of home visits are described.

Establishing Genuine Parent/Teacher Partnerships: A Home Visit Approach

Schools are challenged to meet the literacy needs of all of their children. School districts are constantly reevaluating their reading programs in attempts to meet the needs of their low-achieving readers. While it appears that struggling readers benefit from individual attention, teachers are overwhelmed with the demands of literacy programs that are individualized according to students' needs. Students are frustrated when they struggle, and parents are frustrated when their child has difficulty learning to read. Why are so many children experiencing difficulty learning to read? We all seem to be fighting the battle alone. Instead, we need to lessen the burden and narrow the gap. It's time to come together and begin building genuine parent/teacher partnerships. A school's reading program becomes much more successful with support from parents; few children are successful in reading without the support of schools and parents working together. We need parents and teachers working together to pave the literacy path for our children's reading success.

The importance of building parent partnerships today is more crucial and more challenging than ever before. Single-parent families are becoming the most common family structure in the U.S. today (Barbour & Barbour, 1997). It is estimated that over 50% of marriages today will end in divorce and nearly half of all children born in this decade will spend a significant part of their childhood in a single parent home (Gestwicki, 1992). Single parents raising children have increasing demands that keep them from being involved in their child's education. Poverty is another factor that affects single parent homes. Along with the financial

burdens single parents have the stress of being in both the mother and father role. Work responsibilities of single parents leave children unattended or with daycare providers. These life demands are taking parents away from their child's literacy development (Auerbach, 1989). Families also find themselves uprooted in search of employment opportunities. This moves them away from their extended families and, as a result, they have no available support from family. Parents then begin to feel a sense of isolation and separation from the community and, more importantly, from their child's school. A third reason that establishing parent/teacher partnerships is more challenging than ever before is our rapidly-changing society. Parents are raising their children in a society that is much different from the one they were raised in. Changing values, laws and norms of behavior result in a different way of life (Gestwicki, 1992).

As a result of marital instability, poverty, mobilization, social change, and the role of men and women we find that parents are not readily available for traditional modes of parent participation in schools. Parents have less of an opportunity to be involved in education. Also, parents may not feel adequate to participate due to cultural and economic differences. When educators do not take time to get to know their children's families and their cultural backgrounds, they are at a disadvantage. Families can offer educators a picture of what children experience outside the classroom. Parents experience their children's development intimately and have valuable insights to share with their child's teacher (Swick, 1997). Shirley Brice Heath's research (1982) demonstrates the importance of knowing the cultural background of our children. It helps us as educators to understand the ways in which

our children use their language to *take from literature* and grow into literate adults. We all have our own *ways of taking* from literature. As educators we need to understand those ways of taking (Heath, 1982). “The teacher’s role is to connect what happens inside the classroom to what happens outside so that literacy can become a meaningful tool for addressing the issues in students’ lives” (Auerbach, 1989, p. 166).

“The purpose in breaking down barriers between home and school is not to coerce, or even persuade parents to take on literacy definitions held by teachers. Rather, it is to enable both teachers and parents to understand the way in which each defines values, and uses literacy as part of their cultural practices” (Cairney & Munsie, 1995, p. 393). Schools must accept all children and the cultural experiences they bring to school. Teachers must relate to and interact with several different family types and their values. Sincere interactions build the foundation for a healthy home-school-community relation (Barbour & Barbour, 1997). Parents play a vital role in their child’s academic success. As a result, the shorter the distance between home and school, the more successful are the children. After all, children’s first teachers are their parents (Acosta, Keith, & Patin 1997).

The Educate America Act (Goals 2000) states that: “By the year 2000 every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children” (United States Code, 1995, p.1069). Traditionally, schools have involved parents by asking them to chaperone field trips, send baked goods, and attend conferences and open houses. These informal demands have asked parents to give and allowed little

or no feedback on the parents behalf (Swap, 1993). Teachers have seldom asked parents their opinions or inquired how they might support them. As educators we need to shift from a deficit view and see parents as partners in their child's education. Families provide the first informal education through modeling, teaching, praise and discipline (Berger, 1995). Educators need to value these lessons and support parents in their attempts to educate their children.

Educators often design home-school programs based on what they assume parents need, rather than on the actual wishes of parents. As a result, programs are based on educators' perceptions rather than parents' desires. When programs lack input from parents, they have a greater likelihood of failure. It's critical to hear the voices of families when designing home literacy programs (Neuman, Caperelli, & Kee, 1998). Successful programs are based on the needs of parents and children (Fredricks, 1990). When decision making is not shared, a sense of distrust on the parents' part often occurs. "Successful family literacy initiatives must move beyond a focus on how parents can support the work of teachers and concentrate instead on finding collaborative ways to support children's learning. Such an approach requires a shift away from the traditional role of teacher-as-expert providing information so that parents can do their jobs better. Rather, in true partnerships, teachers and parents work together and learn from each other so that all participants, especially children, benefit from the effort" (West & Galda, L., 1996, p. 170).

Building a genuine respectful partnership allows the students, parents and teachers to feel important and valued. Authentic relationships establish a solid foundation to work on. Children benefit from strong teacher/parent relationships by

gaining increased academic skills, positive self-concept, and increased verbal intelligence (Gestwicki, 1992). Parents also experience an increase in self worth when they are involved in their child's education and feel comfortable with their child's teacher. Benefits for teachers include increased knowledge, which allows the teacher to be more effective with each child, and positive feedback, which increases their own feelings of competence in their profession. Another benefit is parental resources to supplement and reinforce teacher efforts. More importantly, a genuine partnership between parents and teachers benefits the children they most care about (Gestwicki, 1992).

There are several ways teachers can build genuine partnerships with their children's parents. They can begin by inviting parents to informal gatherings. One way is to arrange a back-to-school picnic at a local park. Other ways may include making neighborhood visits, making positive phone calls, and sending home literacy kits to develop literacy in the home. Using home literacy bags, Ann Barbour discovered an overwhelming positive parent response. Parents reported learning more about their child's interests and appreciated ideas to encourage their children to read (Barbour, 1998). Inviting parents to give input through classroom surveys also builds genuine parent/teacher partnerships (Swap, 1993). "When parents are invited to bring information about their child's involvement with print to the classroom, teachers can use it to understand their students as people and literacy learners" (Lazar, 1996, p. 228).

A home visit allows the family to interact from the comfort of their own home. Those parents who are not able to come to school due to work or other

commitments appreciate the time given to them to discuss their children (Stacey, 1991). The Family and Child Education program, sponsored by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) uses home visits as a means of educating families of Native American children. After reviewing research on effective schools and interviewing childhood education experts, the BIA decided that early intervention programs along with parent involvement were needed in order to encourage school success in children who were falling behind. (Field, Costello, Begay, & Alivado, 1996).

One teacher, Ruth Nathan, writes about how she was interested in building a community of learners in her classroom through home visits. To make this possible, she scripted an open letter to parents inviting herself to dinner. In the course of the year, she received invitations and visited the home of every child in her class. Once in the children's home, this third-grade teacher discovered why certain students had a passion for reading and why some parents never attended a conference. She discovered valuable insights that helped her to understand behaviors in the classroom. In the comfort of a third grader's home, Nathan enjoyed a duet, "Lovin You," performed by her student and the student's father. This experience led her to the understanding of why this particular student was eager to speak in front of the class (Nathan, 1995).

Preparing for Home Visits

Last year as a third-grade teacher inspired by Ruth Nathan's work with parents, I, too, wanted to connect with the families of my students in the comfort of their homes. Home visits had appealed to me for some time. I was interested in making home visits as a means of connecting with my students' literacy lives outside

the classroom. Prior to making the visits, I came up with some guidelines that were very helpful to me (see Figure 1).

Deciding Which Homes to Visit

As the end of the school year neared, I reflected on my teaching practices in reading. I had worked very hard in my classroom assessing the students and trying to design a reading program that best fit their needs. According to my records, all of my students had made at least a year's growth in reading. However, six of my students still fell behind grade level and still struggled with reading. We had worked so hard on reading one-on-one and in small groups that it was difficult for me to let them go. I needed more closure to our work together than simply, "It's June 9th, the last day of school, and my job of teaching you how to read is done." We had worked hard on reading strategies and I hoped they wouldn't forget about them over the summer. I decided that I needed to bring some closure to the school year by spending more time with parents than fifteen-minute biyearly conferences allowed.

What I Hoped to Accomplish

I wanted the opportunity to visit these students' homes, share what we had been working on in school, and discuss what they could work on over the summer. I also wanted to know how parents felt about home visits and whether or not they felt home visits were beneficial to their child's education. Finally, I wanted to discover what knowledge the parents could share with me about their child. I was nervous about inviting myself into their homes and I didn't have the courage to invite myself to dinner, so I began searching for a reason to get myself into their homes. (Now, I realize that just going to visit about reading was reason enough!)

that would not interfere with dinner hour or any other commitments they had. I also made it clear that I only intended to stay half an hour. I did not want to be too intrusive. If the parents felt comfortable with a longer visit once I was in the home, then I would stay. I left that decision to them. All of the parents seemed to be pleased to have me come into their homes. I didn't realize that it would be that simple! I felt somewhat foolish about waiting until the last few months of the school year. It had taken me that long to get up the courage to call. I decided to keep a journal of my visits and of the children's progress in school to look for a possible correlation between the visits and the children's progress.

The Typical Home Visit

Although, each visit was unique, for the most part the visits followed the same format. Once in the home I greeted the family and asked where they would like me to work with their child. First I began working with the child, and then invited the parent(s) to join us. The child and I first engaged in small talk. Then, we began surveying the books I had brought. I let the child choose one he/she would like to read first. Before reading we studied the cover and walked through the pages predicting what the story would be about. The children were curious to see if they were familiar with the author and if it was a "chapter book." It seems that the goal of almost all third graders is to be reading a chapter book! I was pleased when the students began predicting on their own. If they didn't, I simply asked them questions like, "What does the cover tell us might happen in the book?" "Do you see anything interesting on the first page?" After previewing and making a prediction, we began reading the book together. I gave them the choice of reading to me or partner

reading together. I wanted to let the children have some choice and make them feel comfortable with me in their home. I gave each of the children a bookmark with Strategic Word Attack Technique (S.W.A.T.) strategies they could use when they came to a *tricky word* (Beed, Hawkins, & Roller, 1991). Most of the children felt comfortable with the strategies, but needed a reminder periodically. The strategy bookmark was a concrete reminder for them.

After reading for about 15 minutes, we engaged in a literature discussion of the book asking questions and relating the events to our own lives. As our discussion came to a close, I invited the parent(s) to join us in reading. Together the child and I explained how we engaged in the book we were reading. We shared how we predicted, summarized and asked questions about the book. The child also demonstrated how he or she problem- solved the “tricky words” using the S.W.A.T. strategies. In addition to the S.W.A.T. strategies, I gave the parents a guide Regie Routman (1991) suggests in her book *Invitations* on how parents should respond to their children when they make reading errors.

After reading, the parent, the child, and I looked through a home literacy kit I brought for the child (see Figure 2). The kit included literacy activities that could be worked on over the summer. Before leaving the child’s home, I asked the parent(s) if they would share their views on home visits with me. I wanted to know if the parents felt home visits were beneficial, and what they felt should be done during home visits. Each parent filled out a questionnaire on the home visits (see Figure 3).

How the Home Visits Went

In general the home visits went well, and parents were very appreciative of having their child's teacher in their home. Most of the parents were eager to know what they could do to assist their child in reading. Some parents wanted me to visit their home more than once. Although most of the parents were positive, there were a couple of parents who did not seem interested in working with their child. In those homes, I mostly worked one-on-one with the child. As for the children, initially, when the children discovered that I would be coming to their homes, their immediate thought was that they were in trouble. I was saddened to think that children only associate teacher-parent contact with negative behaviors. I explained to each of the children what I would be doing so they would not await the home visit with anxiety. In the following three sections, I describe my impressions of the home visits based on the children's responses, the parents' responses and finally, my own personal insights as a teacher.

My Teacher's Coming to my Home

Through my home visits, I found that the children considered my coming to their home a special event. The children's actions made me realize how happy they were to see me. I noted in my journal how the first visit went.

As I drove to my first home, I fumbled through my purse to find the house address. Just then, I heard my name being called out. I looked up to see Erica and her brother waiting for me on their porch. Erica was full of smiles. The first words she said were, "Do you want to see my room?" Before I had a chance to respond, Erica was leading me up the stairs to her room. Posted all around her room were

reading awards she had earned throughout the school year. I didn't realize the awards had meant so much.

Erica wanted to share so many things with me. This was a different side to a little girl who was normally very quiet and shy in the classroom. The children's actions made me realize how happy they were to see me.

For some of the children, the home visits changed their behaviors in the classroom. Jack was one child who changed considerably.

I'll never forget when I approached Jack's home. He was waiting for me outside on his bike. When he saw my car, he began jumping up and down waving at me, afraid I might drive by. His excitement gave me a good feeling inside. I parked my car in front of Jack's house and walked over to where he was standing with his bike. We visited for awhile then, I asked him if he would like to go into his house to work. He turned without a word and proceeded to open the front porch door. We both walked through a path cleared through toys and other odds and ends. When we got into the living room, I noticed Jack's mom lying on the couch beneath a sleeping bag, and his older sister was sitting on the other couch that occupied the room. Just as we entered, I heard Jack's mother turn off the television. For a few seconds there was silence and I felt inside that I was intruding in their home. I wondered if she remembered I was coming over. I immediately told them that they could continue to watch their program and that Jack and I could work in the next room if that was okay with her. The television went back on, so I assumed that it was okay for Jack and I to work in the next room.

Jack was eager to read. Together we found a special place he could keep his books. He assured me he would read a little each night before he went to bed. When I asked Jack what he liked about having his teacher come over to his house, he responded, "I liked it, because I didn't have anyone to play with today." I laughed at his honesty and felt that we had made a special connection. Before leaving, I went into the living room and sat on the floor beneath the couch where Jack's mother was lying down. I pulled out the books that we had read and told her that Jack would love to read with her in the evenings if she had the time to do so. I explained that Jack would benefit greatly from the practice in reading. His mom agreed through a smile and a nod.

I noticed in the days to follow that Jack was anxious to tell me about the books he was reading. He even began bringing his homework to school, which was an issue we hadn't discussed. The positive connection I made with him was trickling into so many positive behaviors.

My first round of home visits continued, and with each one I gained valuable insights. After my visit to Alex's home, I wrote the following in my journal:

Alex shared with me that he doesn't like to read out loud, because he is afraid of making mistakes. He also shared that reading in a small group with other children makes him confused. I had never heard Alex speak so much about a story in the classroom. Was it the book about astronauts that interested him so much, or was he at ease and more willing to talk? I wondered if this behavior would carry over to the classroom after the home visit.

When I got back to the classroom, I looked back at my observations. I had noted on several occasions that Alex had difficulty keeping his place when reading in guided groups. Now, he was telling me for himself his feelings about reading in the classroom. His concern was genuine. Why hadn't I asked him how he felt before? Sometimes, the fast pace of the classroom keeps us from noticing the little things that mean so much.

My visits continued and each student responded positively. It was my impression that the children felt comfortable with me in their homes. They seemed more willing to take risks.

Lauren, her mom and two younger brothers were sitting outside on their front stoop when I pulled up to the house. Lauren's mom led us into the kitchen and offered me something to drink. Her mother began telling me about the work they were doing to their home. I, too, shared a "home improvement" story of my own. The atmosphere felt much different than Jack's home. I was able to carry on a bit of conversation with Lauren's mom, which relaxed the atmosphere for the both of us. After a few minutes, Lauren and I began working with the books I had brought, while her mother played with her two brothers in the yard. Listening to Lauren read in the quiet of her home revealed so much more to me than in the classroom. When Lauren reads in the classroom she often pauses for long periods of time before she is willing to say the unknown word. In her home she was willing to take a few more risks. She felt comfortable using her word attack strategies and was more confident in her ability to read.

Overall, the children demonstrated more confidence and proved to be stronger in their ability to read in their homes. I wondered if they actually performed better, or if it was that I listened and concentrated on the children more? I believe it may have been a little of both. The children were not distracted and felt more confident. I, too, was not distracted; I was able to focus more on them and praise their strengths.

Parents Respond Positively

In my home visits, I learned so much about the relationships between the parents and the children. I learned that all the parents had a sincere interest in their child's progress. Most of the parents wanted to know what they could do to help their children be successful in reading. One parent wrote the following to me after I had made a few visits to their home:

I think reading is the most important subject for children. There are so many children who need help and it's good to know that there are teachers like you who are willing to go out of their way to help these children. I wish there were more one-on-one programs and more financial funding made available. Megha was very excited to receive the books you gave her. She has read them and is rereading them again. I hope you share any ideas and suggestions you have with us that will help us work with her.

Megha was fortunate to have an older sibling that could help her at home in addition to help from her mom and dad. On my last home visit, Megha, her mom, her older sister and I went through the home literacy kit. Megha's parents were grateful to have materials they could use to help Megha over the summer. Her

parents were aware of her struggle with reading, but in the past no one had given them specific ideas about what they could do to help. The home literacy kit gave them some concrete activities they could do to help Megha with her reading. Most schools inform parents about what their child is learning; however, few share how they learn, which would help parents in assisting their children (Giordano, 1992).

Through these visits, my eyes were opened to the needs of my students and to their families' concerns about their progress. I felt that each visit had made an impact on the children and their attitudes toward reading. I couldn't help thinking how much more of an impact it would have made had I began my visits at the beginning of the year! The comments of one parent really reinforced this point:

I appreciate the personal contact you made with my child, and the care you took to get to know my daughter. My child feels so special that you came to visit her home. The extra time will make a difference in her reading skills. I think it's important for us to interact, because you spend so much time with her at school. When you worked with my daughter in our home it gave her the opportunity to read with out distractions and peer pressure. Besides receiving reading assistance, my child has become more comfortable with you. I feel that home visits are worthwhile in that if there is something I can do to assist my child in reading, then I will do it!

I was overwhelmed with the parent support. The majority of the parents were more than willing to do whatever they could to assist their children. In the homes in which parent support did not initially seem as strong, I believe that eventually it would become stronger with continued visits.

How Home Visits Changed A Teacher's Perspective

Home visits were valuable in helping me understand the children's development and their parents' perceptions. I'm sure that I gained more from these home visits than anyone. The home visits made me reflect on my teaching practices and view the children for who they were in and out of the classroom.

I also learned that parents are approachable when it comes to helping their children. A home visit is not something to dread. I wasn't always comfortable with the idea of meeting parents in their homes. Before and during my first home visit I was very nervous. I wrote about it in my journal:

Erica's mom asked me if I'd like a drink. Since my mouth was extremely dry from being nervous, I gladly accepted. The only problem was that, as I reached for the can, my trembling hand nearly spilled the drink. Immediately I set it down on the table and told myself to relax. I took a couple of deep breaths and began talking. Each minute that passed, I became more and more comfortable. I couldn't help but think, "Is this how our parents feel when they come to conferences at school?" For many, I'm sure it's an intimidating experience.

I respected my parents even more for what they had done in raising their children. A single parent who worked full time was especially grateful since her time was so limited. She appreciated the opportunity to see her child work with his teacher and to see how he responded:

I enjoyed seeing my son interact with you. He seemed so intent on doing his best. Nothing distracted him, not even when I walked through the room. The books

you gave him gave me some insight as to what my child was actually capable of reading.

Most of the parents had known their child struggled with reading, but needed to actually see what they were capable of doing. Telling a parent their child reads below grade level doesn't mean as much as showing them what they can actually do.

As a result of what I learned in home visits, I made adjustments in the classroom. In my journal entry about the visit to Alex's home, I wrote the following:

Alex's parents really wanted to talk. I stayed an extra hour. They shared that school had a negative impact on them. Neither had finished high school, but both had gone back to get their GEDs. They wanted to be there for their son, but weren't sure how to go about doing so. Both shared that coming to the school was an intimidating experience for them. I was pleased that Alex's parents felt comfortable enough with me to share feelings, and saddened that it had taken me this long to get to know their concerns. Alex needed his parents and teacher to have a strong relationship in order for him to feel secure about himself. He responded with confidence about his reading when we were in the comfort of his home.

To my surprise, I found that Alex was a stronger reader than I had previously discovered in the classroom. He had not responded well on informal reading inventories and running records of his reading in the classroom. I had known that Alex was easily distracted in the classroom and often took a while to complete his assignments, but I didn't realize that my assessment on Alex was also skewed due to classroom distractions. Reading with Alex in his home, I realized that he was more advanced than I had previously thought. I realized that arrangements needed to be

made for Alex in the classroom. I shared with Alex how much better he read for me at home than at school. We decided that he would be able to have a special seat in the classroom when he needed to concentrate on his reading. This delighted him. He choose to sit alone when he needed to get his work done. It was a joint decision and not a punishment!

The home visits allowed me to get to know my students and their learning styles. In just a short amount of time I learned more about the students than six months of school had revealed to me.

Conclusions

When teachers connect what happens inside the classroom to what happens outside the classroom, literacy then becomes more meaningful in students lives (Auberbach, 1989). Home visits provided the opportunity for me to get to know the children in a way the classroom did not allow. I was able to understand their interests, learning styles, strengths, and needs in more of a holistic way. The parents were supportive, warm and friendly. They wanted to know what they could do to help their child be successful, and were appreciative of the support they received during the home visit. The parents of my students felt comforted to know that their opinion counted. I felt good working with the parents in a partnership. They had valuable information to offer and I, too, had knowledge to share with them.

Many critical decisions are based on the assessment we do on our children in the classroom. I have learned that not only is it important to vary your assessment, it is also important to vary the context in which the assessment takes place. More importantly, it is important to build a strong relationship with parents. The mutual

respect you have with your student's parents is the foundation from which the best possible learning environment is built.

In the future, I would like to begin making visits during the summer months before school begins. If I had had the insight that I gained in my home visits before school began, I would have made different instructional decisions in the classroom. The home visits gave me the opportunity to see a genuine more human side to my children. The parents and the children, too, got to know me as a person. I strongly believe that building parent partnerships through home visits and working with parents to help educate our children offers so much more to the children than a language arts program alone can provide. Each of us strives to be an exceptional teacher, but we know we cannot do it without the children's first teachers, their parents (Shockley, Michalove, & Allen, 1995).

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Figure Captions

Figure 1. Recommended guidelines when making a home visit.

Figure 2. A home literacy kit contains supplies and a list of activities the child can do to enhance literacy development.

Figure 3. Parent survey questions for a home visit.

Guidelines During a Home Visit

- Define your purpose
- Greet the parents in a friendly manner
- Listen carefully
- Be flexible and prompt
- Be trustworthy
- Assist parents in becoming more independent
- Dress appropriately
- Be confident and genuine
- Be mindful of cultural and ethnic values
- Remember you are being observed
- Involve other family members
- Choose developmentally appropriate activities
- Seek parent permission before bringing a visitor
- Keep socializing to a minimum
- Respect privacy of families
- Reinforce parent/child strengths
- Work with parents not against
- Build a partnership with parents
- Make a follow-up contact with parents by phone or in person

Activities and Supplies Contained in a Home Literacy Kit

Activities

Read to yourself
Write a letter to a friend or relative
Send a postcard
Make a thank you card for someone
Word Sorts
Make a daily Message board
Write out a grocery list
Write a story
Read a book to a family member
Make a bookmark of your favorite book
Go to the public library
Read the comics
Make up a skit for your family
Word search
Create a personal dictionary
Keep a reflection journal
Write a poem

Supplies:

Books, pencils, lined paper and drawing paper, crayons, markers, glue, stickers, index cards, yarn, and a folder

Home Literacy Parent Questionnaire

1. What are the three best things about having teachers make home visits?
2. What would you like the teacher to do during a home visit?
3. Do you feel your child enjoyed the home visit? Did they share their thoughts with you?
4. Do you feel home visits offer more to your child than tutoring at school? In what ways?
5. Do you have any concerns about home visits?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add?