Home Visit Resource

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Purpose and Research

Purpose
The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) Preschool Services for Children with Disabilities (PSCD), pre-kindergarten, Sure Start and kindergarten home visits develop a collaborative relationship between home and school. Home visits expand teachers’ knowledge of students’ home life and cultural backgrounds. The home visit occurs during the first week of school and sets the stage for family engagement throughout the year.

Research
Educational research recommends home visits as a method to develop a collaborative and child-directed relationship between the home and the school. It has been found that home visits provide an opportunity for teachers and families to build relationships and expand teachers’ knowledge of each student’s home life and cultural background. Home visits provide a foundation for establishing family engagement with the school. Over time, research has shown that children whose parents are involved in their education tend to do better in attendance, grades, and graduation rates.

Understanding the importance of family engagement and establishing a strong home-school partnership foundation, DoDEA established that home visits should be conducted for the youngest learners entering DoDEA schools. The universal entry point in DoDEA-Americas is pre-kindergarten, and it is kindergarten in DoDEA-Europe and DoDEA-Pacific. Home visits are included as an expected component of the curriculum for these programs during the first days of the school year.

Recently, the Johns Hopkins University School of Education conducted a study, The Family Engagement Partnership Student Outcome Evaluation, linking improvements in the performance of D.C. public elementary school students to family engagement. In particular, the study examined the association between relationship-building parent-teacher home visits and outcomes including student attendance, school re-enrollment, and grade-level proficiency on literacy skills assessments. Researchers found that students whose teachers visited them at home with the purpose of building relationships with their families were less likely to miss school. Researchers also found that these same students were more likely to read at or above grade level compared to similar students who did not receive a home visit. These findings are a step forward in understanding the potential for improving student academic outcomes through meaningful teacher and family collaboration, and they support DoDEA’s home visit requirement as a strong foundational practice.¹

Practical Tips for Successful Home Visits

Before the Visit

- Plan your route to include addresses and maps, along with the first and last names of the parents and the child. Parents may have a different last name.
- Cluster visits to minimize travel time. For example, on-base one day and off-base the next.
- Schedule your home visits with ample time to travel and just in case the visit prior goes a little over time.
- Share the schedule and route for the day with the office and your principal.
- Do not take a toy on this first meeting. However, a book to model interactive reading, crayons and paper to assess fine motor skills, and a finger puppet for a shy child that may be useful. The purpose is to learn more about the child, including his/her interests and favorite activities.
- Bring a cell phone with emergency numbers and let the office know your cell phone number.
- Never go alone. The paraprofessional is the best choice for accompanying you. However; another staff member (for example: counselor, psychologist, culture teacher, administrator) can accompany the teacher if the paraprofessional is not available. The teacher and paraprofessional may need to take a translator if the parents’ home language is not English.
- Make clear the expectations of the visit on the phone call. In addition, encourage the parent to plan a separate activity for any siblings to help prevent possible interference. If the sibling persists, be prepared to say to the sibling directly, “This is my special time to visit with Sam today. I will come and see what you are doing before I leave.”

During the Home Visit

- Home visits usually last 30-45 minutes depending on each family. Allow extra time for visits that may run late or hard to find homes.
- During the visit, you are to spend your time interacting with the child, while the paraprofessional aide can interact with the parents. You might want to have the parents fill out a few short questions that will tell you more about the child’s interests, or the questionnaire can be given to the parents when they register their child.
- Let the child know when your visit is about to end. “We will play for five more minutes, and then I will need to chat with your parents before I leave.”
- If you feel uncomfortable at any time, leave the location immediately with a tactful explanation to the parents. It is important to share this with your principal.

After the Visit

- It is helpful to jot down a few notes to remember information about the child and the visit. Build time into the travel schedule for reflection. This will help when you meet the child on the first day of school. “Sam, I had fun visiting your home. How is your teddy bear?”
- When you return to school, summarize your visits with your principal.
Forms and Templates

Sample Home Visit Reflection

1. Focus on the child from the start.
2. Ask the child about his/her favorites (color, food, toys, books)
3. Ask about family interests.
4. What are the family’s expectations, hopes and dreams for their child?
5. Share only one expectation you have for their child.
6. Invite the parents to attend a specific school function.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Name:</th>
<th>Address:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent’s Name:</th>
<th>Parent’s Name:</th>
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</thead>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email Address:</th>
<th>Phone Number:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection:</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>
Sample: Getting to Know Your Child: A Home Visit Questionnaire

Child’s Name: ________________________________  School Year: _______________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Does your child live with:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ both parents  □ one parent  □ other adults</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Does your child have his/her own room? (□ YES / □ NO)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If not, with whom does your child share a room?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 3. Which of these words best describes your child?         |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------|
| □ lacks self-control  or  □ uses self-control            |
| □ independent  or  □ dependent                            |
| □ pleasant  or  □ disagreeable                            |
| □ attentive  or  □ inattentive                             |
| □ follows directions  or  □ does not follow directions    |
| □ outgoing  or  □ shy                                      |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. What are your child’s favorite play activities and interests?</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. How does your child get along with peers?</th>
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<tr>
<th>6. How many hours a day does your child engage in screen time (TV, computer, video games, handheld games, tablet, or smart phone)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
7. How often do you read to your child at home?

8. What makes your child happy? Sad?

9. What are your child’s strengths?

10. In what area does your child need support?

11. What are your fears for your child this year?

12. What are your top three hopes and dreams for your child this year?

13. What else would you like us to know about your child?
Sample Travel Schedule Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Time:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20___ to 20___</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Child’s Name:

Father’s Name: | Mother’s Name: |
<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

Address:

Special notes to find the house:

Comments to remember:
Ideas to Foster Family Engagement Throughout the Year

Engagement Ideas: Authentic opportunities to engage families to establish relationships as they share the learning experience. This time is intentionally planned to continue the relationship that began during the home visit. It is an interactive time when parents and their child engage during the school day in the classroom. The time is intentional with the parents and their child, and it is separate from school activities/events.

Learning Linked with Assessment

Showcase Portfolio Open House (collection of the child’s work): Before the end of the reporting period, parents can drop in to share their child’s successes.

Power of Observation: Parents are scheduled to observe their child while the children are actively engaged during center time. The teacher chooses three developmental areas for parents to focus on and help bring insight – social, fine motor and a content area like math. This collaboration between school and home could happen just before parent-teacher conferences to bring meaning to the assessment shared.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fine Motor: cutting with scissors</th>
<th>In school, I observed my child...</th>
<th>At home, I observe my child...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cutting on a line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning Together

- Call parents to share positive growth and areas of improvement.
- Send emails that include pictures.
- All about Me and School – measurement comparisons, cardinality
- Family Days (during the fall or spring) – outside centers
- STEM Challenge with a Theme – teaching the engineering process
  - Reach to the Sky – building using different materials to reach up high
    **Ask two questions:**
    1. What shape was the best to build with?
    2. What material was best?
  - How far will you fly? – use different materials to make things that fly
    **Ask two questions:**
    1. How can you make it fly the farthest?
    2. How can you make it fly the highest?
- Parent Lunch and Learn – parents bring their own lunch and together works on a project with their child. For example, a scavenger hunt around the room finding things that begins with the letters in the child’s name.
Current Research
The resources below contain information about the benefits of home visits for students and parents.


Any references to non-federal articles and links throughout this document do not constitute endorsement by DoDEA or DoD of the authors or organizations.
Questions and Answers
Below are frequently asked questions about conducting home visits.

1. What is the purpose of conducting home visits?
   - DoDEA PSCD, pre-kindergarten, Sure Start and kindergarten home visits develop a collaborative relationship between home and school. Home visits expand the teacher’s knowledge of the student’s home life and cultural background. The home visit occurs during the first week of school and sets the stage for family engagement throughout the year. It is considered instructional time creating the foundational relationship between child and teacher and teacher with parents.

2. What if the parents do not speak English?
   - Take a translator – if you are overseas, ask to take the Culture teacher or someone who works at the school who speaks the native language. Encourage the English-speaking parent to also be present for the home visit.

3. What if the parents refuse a visit?
   - Call back, but do not press – other parents will encourage them to open their heart and home.
   - Recommended alternatives (if the family is new and still in billeting, for example):
     a) Offer the family to meet at school with the child and/or
     b) Meeting in a mutual location on/off post with the child.

4. What if you spot evidence of neglect or abuse?
   - Share your observation with your principal. Proceed according to local guidance from your school.

5. Do I still have to schedule a home visit if the family has not returned from summer leave, is on emergency leave, or the child starts after the first day of school?
   - Home visits begin the home-school relationship. Yes, the visit should be scheduled per the accommodation of the schedules of the parents, paraprofessional and teacher. This way, the child has a “like experience” and schema with peers.