

Relational Parent Teacher Home Visits Boost Attendance

This innovative and cost-effective model of home visits is designed to connect educators and families so they can collaborate to support their students. [Research](#) shows this approach can improve not only academic performance and teacher capacity, but also boost attendance.

[Parent Teacher Home Visits](#) (PTHV) is a nonprofit that trains teachers to develop a meaningful relationship with their students' families, starting with a voluntary home visit. The project has evolved into a non-profit network of over 500 diverse communities throughout the US that use this relational model. Independent evaluations show that Parent Teacher Home Visits improve attendance, academic learning, school climate, family engagement, cultural competence and test scores.

PTHV is designed to bring the most important adults in a child's life, the family and the teachers, together as partners. Relational home visits are meetings set up in advance at a mutually convenient time, where teachers and family members learn from each other in order to help their student succeed.

Home visits, done in the summer or fall, establish rapport early, before any problems arise. After the first visit, the family and the teachers continue to build upon their connection. Specific issues, like chronic absence, may be addressed in follow up communications, including a second visit. At this point, teachers and parents can develop a shared understanding of why chronic absence is an important issue and how missing school might be holding the child back. Depending upon the reasons behind the absences, the adults are encouraged to work as a team to address the problem and utilize resources available as needed.

Studies have shown that the benefits of Parent Teacher Home Visits include:

- Families feel that their student's teacher really cares about the child's success.
- Families have a deeper understanding of what their children are learning and feel more confident in supporting their child academically.
- Families are clear about the teacher's expectations for the student, including the



Building Trust, and Solutions

Parent Teacher Home Visits can build trust, communication and accountability between families and teachers.

Effective home visits are never drop-ins, inspections or interventions. While home visits have historically used by schools to address truancy, and were typically conducted as reactive, punitive measures that come too late. These types of visits often added to a family's lack of trust and communication with the school.

Instead of knocking on doors unannounced, PTHV is a relational approach to partnership between families and the school. Home visits are offered across the student population (without the stigma of targeting for absences or other negative behavior) in order to establish a positive, proactive relationship between the school and the family.

Once this relationship has begun, teachers and families share knowledge and expectations around tardiness and attendance, and work together to identify and address the needs of the child.

necessity of being in class every day. Teachers benefit by hearing the families' expectations of them.

- Teachers hear a family's hopes and dreams for their children, and can help them set and achieve goals.
- Students feel pride in their families and themselves.
- Educators build their own cultural competence and compassion for the families of their students, which are likely to come from different ethnic, racial and/or class backgrounds.
- Teachers learn the challenges a family or student may face in getting to school every day.

Consider how the list of PTHV benefits above dovetail with the four reasons for chronic absenteeism. Can you see how Parent Teacher Home Visits could help counteract Myths, Barriers, Aversion and Disengagement at your school?

Research shows the impact of PTHV's approach—a [2015 study by Johns Hopkins University](#) of 4,000 students in Washington, D.C. showed that students who received home visits had 24 percent fewer absences than those who didn't. Behind the data, however, are the stories of individual teachers, parents and administrators who have seen the impact of this powerful model. Here are a few of their [testimonies](#).

For a busy teacher, the idea of home visits can be overwhelming, adding to the "to-do/will I ever be done?" list. But relational home visits build the capacity of educators, improve school climate and reduce burnout. Don't forget because **Parent Teacher Home Visits are an important investment in professional development, teachers are compensated for training and visits.**

By approaching families with the goal of building strong, positive relationships—rather than framing the visits around a deficit mindset—PTHV-trained teachers can open the door to a whole new type of discussion with students and families. Once the seeds of trust and respect are planted, teachers and parents have the opportunity to address not only the *what* of chronic absence, but the *why*, and together develop creative solutions that bring each student back to the classroom, where they belong.

Interested in learning more? We recommend the following:



Absenteeism and Equity

Chronic absenteeism has a disproportionate impact on the more vulnerable families in a school population. Race, poverty and physical environment factor into why kids miss school, and into how absences affect students who do not have resources to make up for the loss.

Parent Teacher Home Visits place an emphasis on leaving assumptions at the door. Their goal is to build cross-cultural understanding and compassion between teachers and families. This is especially important with the growing ethnic and racial diversity of US public schools, where students of color are now in the majority. Yet most teachers are white and middle class, and don't live in the neighborhoods where they teach.

Assumptions and blame are useless when it comes to improving attendance. Teachers who do home visits gain insights about why a student is missing too much school, and the solutions that will work for the family.

- Check out the Toolbox at www.pthvp.org, which includes resources for teachers and families, including [5 Steps for Starting Home Visits](#).
- Invite nonprofit Parent Teacher Home Visits to do a free one hour introduction for your school community. Contact Yesenia Gonzalez, Training Coordinator, Yesenia@pthvp.org.