APPENDIX B5

HOME VISIT PROGRAM

Home Visit Teacher Manual

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Home Visit

Teacher Manual

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Schooling in the 21st century must be different than in recent decades. Teachers must see their work as educating the whole student, rather than as merely delivering facts. To educate effectively, teachers must reach out to students' families in ways not traditionally imagined and help bridge the ever-widening gap between home and school, so that students realize they are known, cared about, and expected to achieve.

Family visits offer invaluable insights about students. They can provide new understanding about students' learning styles. For example, some students may work better alone rather than with others, or they may like an active environment more than quiet time. Visits might also reveal the emotional and social needs and behaviors of students. It is helpful to know if they react to problems with tears, anger, or withdrawal, and how they socialize with peers. Through family visits, teachers can identify students' latest interests or concerns, such as a new hobby, an upcoming trip, or a change in the family.

Research on Family Involvement

Caring makes a difference

Years ago a John Hopkin's professor gave a group of graduate students this assignment: Go to the slums. Take 200 boys, between the ages of 12 and 16, and investigate their background and environment. Then predict their chances for the future.

The students, after consulting social statistics, talking to the boys, and compiling much data, concluded that 90 percent of the boys would spend some time in jail.

Twenty-five years later another group of graduate students was given the job of testing the prediction. They went back to the same area. Some of the boys - by then men - were still there, a few had died, some had moved away, but they got in touch with 180 of the original 200. They found that only four of the group had ever been sent to jail.

Why was it that these men, who had lived in a breeding place of crime, had such a surprisingly good record? The researchers were continually told: "Well, there was a teacher..."

They pressed further, and found that in 75 percent of the cases it was the same woman. The researchers went to this teacher, now living in a home for retired teachers. How had she exerted this remarkable influence over that group of children? Could she give them any reason why these boys should have remembered her?

"No," she said, "no I really couldn't." And then, thinking back over the years, she said musingly, more to herself than to her questioners: "I loved those boys...."

Family Involvement

Research clearly shows that school programs, that emphasize family involvement and relate well to their community, have students who outperform those in schools lacking these qualities. Not only do students flourish, but also the schools are strengthened when families seize an active interest in their children's educations. The results include (a) improved academic achievement, (b) better attendance, improved behavior, (c) higher quality of education, and (d) safe and disciplined learning environment.

A new body of research by the Southwest Educational Developmental Laboratory found a positive and convincing relationship between family and community involvement and benefits to students, including academic achievement. Studies concluded that students with involved parents, no matter what income level or background, are more likely to have success in school. (3)

Personal Connections

Key to a child's school success are the relationships established between the teacher and student, and the teacher and the student's family. Family visits offer a good way to develop these relationships on safe, "home" territory. Research has shown that one of the keys to successful teaching and schooling is creating personal connections with students inside and outside of school (Epstein 1998; Heath, 1983; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). Knowing the students' outside interests, families, and home routines, and then using this information to connect in meaningful ways can have huge rewards in helping to construct happier, healthier, and smarter kids. (2)

Why Home Visits

Crucial cooperation

For most students home and school are two different domains. Especially for minority students even the people, languages, foods, rules, duties, and concerns are different in these two worlds. They do not intersect considerably.

Parents and the teachers are critical partners in educating the "whole child". However, parent conferences and other school-hosted meetings do not provide sufficient means for the parties to communicate enough and effectively and to show the student that they are on the same team. Home visits are the teachers' attempt to break the virtual border between the partners, which is most of the time successful.

"I know this is not usual but I specifically came to thank you. Two of son's teachers visited us at home last night, we had a great conversation. I've never had such experience before." Parent of a7th grader, speaking to the school principal in Reno, NV

Proactive or remedial?

Accord schools aim to be proactive in terms of prevention and teaching appropriate behavior by means of character education and college counseling classes and the active participation of teachers by setting up role models for the students and by effective communication through home visits.

As the famous saying goes, a good start leads to a great finish. The most important time of the academic year for the students is the beginning which mostly determines the end of year results. A home visit in the beginning of the year will help students succeed.

Home visits also ease teachers' job substantially. Spending a little time visiting homes of the prospective or new students results in saving a lot of time throughout the year which would otherwise be spent on fixing problems and a healthy, stress-free academic year.

Teachers can focus on raising the quality of their education instead of trying to minimize problems and maintain a healthy personal life.

Parents' Feelings

"It [the family visit] gives me an opportunity to talk to you. It informs, and instead of being right in the school and feeling closed up or whatever–I like being at home.... I mean I feel like we have a good verbal communication, and with the home visits I think I know everything that's going on with him at school, and I hope that you all feel comfortable with him, with what's going on here."

–Ann (a parent) (1)

Specifics of Home Visit Program

Which students?

We aim to visit not only low-achieving but all our students for two reasons:

• Every student benefits from home visits. Often, home visits reveal new ways or opportunities that school can offer to a high-achieving student in order for him/her to thrive more.

• Teachers need to see high-achieving kids besides low achieving ones.

Some parents will reject home visits. They might, however, change their minds or conditions may change at home and therefore invite us later to visit their residencies.

Any priorities?

Yes,

1. New students
2. Low achieving students
3. Seniors who prepare for SAT/ACT
4. Other students

When?

The best time for home visits is before school starts. Teachers see the homes of their students, get insight from parents and tailor instruction accordingly. An efficient way of communication is well established before school starts.

If not paid before school starts, first two months of the school year is the second best period so that necessary adjustments and interventions can be made in the beginning of the school year.

How often?

Ideally once a semester, at least once a year.

Inside Story Headline

Testimony from a teacher.

How to schedule

Scheduling home visits requires persistence. Failing to schedule a visit at your first attempt doesn't always mean that the family doesn't want a home visit. Sometimes, your request doesn't even reach the family. Other times, parents will like the idea very much, however they will forget to discuss an appropriate time and get back to you because of their daily routines.

A combination of the following means can be utilized to schedule home visits:

1- In person

Use the following opportunities to schedule home visits in person

a- Parent Orientation Meetings

Accord Schools' teachers invite parents to the school and inform them about the upcoming school year. This is a wonderful time to schedule a visit. A form like Form 2 on page12 of this booklet can be used to have parents mark their most convenient time on the form.

A new teacher has scheduled 48 home visits before school starts in August 2008 by utilizing parent orientation meetings well.

b- Back to School Nights

Back to School Night is a great opportunity for the teacher to schedule home visits to the families who have not been visited until that time. The same form can be used with available dates of the teacher.

c- Parent Conferences

If there are still some parents who have not marked your form despite your persistent trials, parent conferences can be used.

2- By phone

Phone is the most direct means of communication with parents. Accord's past two year implementation of home visits program showed that parents respond very well to teachers' home visit requests over the phone.

3- By mail

Mail should be the last resort. If the teacher cannot schedule a visit using the above means, mail can be used to schedule a visit.

Inside Story Headline

Testimony from a parent.

Sample Home Visit Request Letter

Hi Mrs. Edwards,

This is Mr. O., Jane's Science teacher. I am writing this e-mail in reference to one of our programs named "HOME VISITS". It is a school tradition that teachers visit students and families at home.

We would like to conduct a short visit and discuss your child's progress, school's programs and future plans, and at the same time get feedback and input from you.

The Home Visits program has been very successful at our school in the past five years and improves student-parent-teacher relationships and creates a caring school environment.

Please choose one of the available time spots below and let me know via e-mail or phone. If none of them is good for you, please let me know when would be a good time for you. I can be reached via e-mail at mr.o@myschool.org or via phone at (123) 987 6543.

Thanks,

Mr. O
Science Teacher

Time spot 1: October 22nd Monday 4:30 pm
Time spot 2: October 25th Thursday 7:30 pm
Time spot 3: October 27th Saturday 11:00 am

Sample Home Visits Scheduling Form for Parent Orientation Meetings

Please choose a date on which you would be available for a home visit, write your name between brackets.

September 2007						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27 7:30 ( )	28	29 4:30 ( )	30	31	1 11:00 ( ) 1:00 ( ) 2:00 ( )
2	3	4 5:30 ( )	5 7:00 ( )	6	7	8
9	10	11 5:30 ( ) 7:00 ( )	12	13 5:30 (7:00 (	14	15 11:00 ( ) 1:00 ( ) 2:30 ( )
16	17 5:30 ( ) 7:00 ( )	18 5:30 ( ) 7:00 ( )	19	20	21	22 11:00 ( ) 1:00 ( ) 2:30 ( )
23	24	25 4:30 ( )	26	27 5:30 ( ) 7:00 ( )	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6

Sample Home Visits Teacher's Scheduling Form

	1st Attempt		2nd Attempt		3rd Attempt		1st Visit		2nd Visit	
Name of Student	Date	Tool	Date	Tool	Date	Tool	Date	Duration	Date	Duration
Marie Ann Edwards	6-Aug	Orient Meet					7-Aug	30 min		
Jessica Gonzalez	6-Aug	Orient Meet					7-Aug	31 min		
John Doe	11-Aug	Phone- Msg	17-Aug	Phone √			21-Aug	35 min		
David Williams	13-Aug	Phone √						40 min.		

Home Visit Recipe

Ingredients:

1- A small gift

2- A smiling face

3- Student's academic records

4- Information about future events

Procedures:

1- Bring along a small gift: A small gift will warm the environment and tell them that you are not a machine that executes tasks and reports problems.

2- Communicate, do not try only to convey messages: As mentioned earlier in this document, home visits are done to get insight from the families, not to lecture them.

As a teacher and a representative of your school, you are trying to figure out how you can help the student better.

3- Be positive: Do not forget; you are there to build bridges. The purpose of the home visit is not to lay out the child's all problems and give him some homework assignments as how to solve his/her problems.

Grades, assignments? Of course you will inform the family about the student's academic successes or failures, but hey the can learn them through progress reports and online student information system of your school.

Home visits should be done to establish a healthy and efficient communication base with families.

4- Praise the student: Every student has something good about him/her. It can be either a habit or an accomplishment done just last week even if it's a tiny little thing. The problems will be discussed naturally.

You need to create a good atmosphere for an efficient cooperation.

6- Inform about upcoming bonding events: Picnics, trips, etc.

Inside Story Headline

A story from an Accord school.

Home Visit Etiquette

1- NOTIFY THE PARENT OF HOME VISIT

- *Contact parent a week to 10 days in advance by phone and letter and follow up with a phone call*
- *Schedule at family's convenience as much as possible*
- *Include purpose of visit (i.e., to provide information about school, learn about family)*
- *Set time limit (i.e., 4:30 – 5:30)*

2- REVIEW CHILD'S RECORDS, FAMILY HISTORY, CULTURAL BACKGROUND

- *Learn names of family members*
- *Research special needs issues*

3- DEVELOP TENTATIVE PLAN FOR VISIT

- *Be flexible*
- *Schedule 45 to 60 minutes for each home visit*
- *Plan travel time, sequence of visits*
- *Dress appropriately*
- *Gather papers, pamphlets, etc.*
- *Be sure of location, carry maps of area*
- *Leave schedule of home visits and emergency contact information with office personnel*

Consider These

- Be a good listener
- Have specific goals or objectives for each visit
- Be flexible
- Be prompt to your home visits
- Realize the limitations of your role
- Help parents become more independent
- Keep language appropriate
- Dress appropriately and comfortably
- Be confident
- Remember that small improvements lead to big ones
- Be yourself
- Respect cultural and ethnic values
- Monitor your own behavior—the parent is observing you

Home Visit Etiquette

4 ARRIVAL

Set the tone

- ***Introduce self and staff***
- ***Establish social connection***
- ***Include other family members in conversation, to make conducive to learning if desired by primary caregiver***

5 DURING THE VISIT

Share information and lend support

- ***Elicit feedback from parents regarding child's interests, concerns, and progress in program and at home: "tell me about your child" or "what does your child like best about school?"***
- ***Discuss parents' interests, hobbies, strengths***
- ***Observe family interaction in its cultural context***
- ***Reinforce positive parenting***

6 CONCLUDING THE VISIT

Summary

- ***Provide information about future parent activities***
- ***Highlight school activities, events***
- ***Invite parents to get involved***
- ***Discuss next visit***
- ***Make yourself available for phone calls and questions***
- ***Closure and good-bye***

Safety Tips

Don't be a target

- Stay alert
- Dress appropriately
- Leave jewelry at home
- Leave purse at office or trunk
- Carry necessary cash, keys, and driver license on person
- Remove yourself from dangerous situations
- Travel in pairs when possible
- Survey the neighborhood
- Identify safe areas (i.e., restaurants, telephones, rest-
- rooms, police stations)
- Trust your instincts
- Consider a neutral meeting location if visit cannot be made safely at home (i.e., library, conference rooms, restaurants)
- Ask family members to come out to meet you if you feel uncomfortable with area
- Keep car in good repair
- Keep emergency supplies in car, include all-weather gear
- Ask family to secure pets before arrival
- Attend safety seminars
- Consider the use of cell phones

Do's and Don'ts

DO

- ***Be a good listener***
- ***Have specific goals or objectives for each visit***
- ***Be flexible***
- ***Be prompt to your home visits***
- ***Realize the limitations of your role***
- ***Help parents become more independent***
- ***Keep language appropriate***
- ***Dress appropriately and comfortably***
- ***Be confident***
- ***Remember that small improvements lead to big ones***
- ***Be yourself***
- ***Respect cultural and ethnic values***
- ***Monitor your own behavior—the parent is observing you***

DON'T

- ***Impose Values***
- ***Bring visitors without the parent's permission***
- ***Socialize excessively at the beginning of the visit***
- ***Exclude other members of the family from the visit***
- ***Talk about families in public***
- ***Be the center of attention***
- ***Expect perfection from the parent***
- ***Ask the parent to do something you wouldn't do***

How do I afford it?

Home visits do not cost much. A visit will cost you about $10 the most if the home is not too far from the school.

Accord Schools compensate their teachers for home visits. Fill out a reimbursement form and get paid back.

(Sample) Home Visit Quick Feedback Form

Name of Student: _____ Date of Visit _____

Sibling(s): _____ _____

Grade/Group (circle): 6A 6B 6C 6D 7A 7B 7C 7D 8A 8B 8C 8D

9A 9B 9C 10A 10B 11A 11B 12A

Length of Visit: ☐ 0-20 minutes ☐ 21-40 minutes ☐ 41-60 minutes

☐ More than 60 minutes

Participating Teacher (s) : _____ _____

_____

Visit notes (check those apply):

☐ New parents; informed about the school and school's

☐ Existing parents/guardians; happy with the school

☐ Existing parents/guardians; have concerns expressed below

☐ Student is successful in his/her classes

☐ Student will participate in after-school tutoring in: _____ _____

☐ Student will start participating in the following clubs:

☐ Parents and the student were informed about the importance of college and careers

☐ Student will participate in college prep

Additional Notes:

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