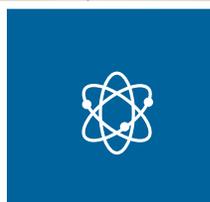


Strengthening Community- Connected Classrooms

From Relationships to Rigorous, Relevant Learning





Creating an equitable, community-connected classroom requires more than surface-level relationship-building and understanding of students' backgrounds—it demands a fundamental shift in how educators view students, families, and their instruction. Parent Teacher Home

Visits (PTHV) is a proven strategy that deepens relationships, transforms mindsets, and offers a rich learning experience for educators seeking to reimagine instruction by centering the voices, cultures, and experiences of students, families, and their communities.

What Are Parent Teacher Home Visits?

PTHV is a **structured, relational approach** to family engagement that fosters trust between educators and families. Unlike traditional school outreach, which often reinforces power imbalances, home visits create a shared space of learning where families are seen as experts on their children. These visits:

- Are **voluntary and strengths-based**, not punitive or evaluative;
- Center relationships by **focusing on hopes and dreams**;
- Are conducted by **educators in pairs**, promoting collaboration and shared reflection; and
- Occur **outside of school**, shifting power dynamics and emphasizing home and community as sites of knowledge.



How PTHV Supports Community-Connected Classrooms

Community-connected classrooms foster a deep sense of belonging, increase engagement, and nurture agency by drawing upon the cultural identities, ways of knowing, and lived experiences of students and their families.¹

Home visits using the PTHV model provide a strong foundation for educators looking to transform their classrooms into culturally responsive and affirming learning spaces deeply connected to their community. PTHV visits help them to:



UNLEARN DEFICIT-BASED MINDSETS – Home visits disrupt stereotypes and assumptions, fostering an asset-based view of students and families.



BRIDGE CULTURE AND COMMUNITY – Educators move beyond surface-level inclusion (e.g., “celebrating diversity”) by **authentically learning about and embedding students’ cultural background, interests, and aspirations into curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment.**



SHIFT INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES – Learning from families influences **what is taught, how it is taught, and whose knowledge is valued in the classroom.**



CO-CONSTRUCT LEARNING EXPERIENCES – Students and families become **partners in designing** what and how students learn and demonstrate knowledge, rather than passive recipients of a predetermined curriculum.

The Research: Shifting Mindsets and Improving Outcomes

Challenging Deficit Thinking & Cultural Norms

U.S. education has long been influenced by cultural norms that prioritize White-dominant perspectives, often marginalizing students whose backgrounds and lived experiences differ from these standards. As a result, many students encounter school environments that feel unwelcoming and unsupportive, leading to dramatic disparities in student outcomes.² One significant factor contributing to these outcomes is deficit thinking—educators may unconsciously hold lower expectations for students based on race, class, or perceived ability, which in turn affects student performance.³ Research demonstrates that teacher expectations do not merely predict student success but actively shape it, reinforcing existing inequities



Explore our research studies, *Mindset Shifts and Parent Teacher Home Visits* and *Student Outcomes and Parent Teacher Home Visits* at <https://pthvp.org/pthv-model-2/research-evaluation/>

if left unexamined.⁴ Home visits serve as a powerful strategy that encourages educators to engage in reflective “mirror work,” critically assessing their own biases, assumptions, and instructional practices to create more inclusive, asset-based learning environments.

Authentic Family Input as a Catalyst for Instructional Change

Building **genuine relationships** through home visits is just the beginning—what

educators **do with that knowledge** is what transforms instruction. Rigorous research shows that home visits using the PTHV model:

- Increase **teacher understanding of students' cultural strengths**;⁵
- Improve **instructional relevance** by incorporating student and family insights;⁶ and
- Lead to **higher student engagement, academic gains, and reduced absenteeism**.⁷

However, educators must go beyond simply **“learning about”** students' cultures to generate meaningful impact.⁸ Without **intentional shifts in pedagogy**, home visits risk becoming a feel-good effort that doesn't challenge the structural inequities baked into traditional schooling.

To truly transform instruction, educators must:

- **Seek authentic input from students and families** – What knowledge, traditions, and ways of learning matter to them? What barriers prevent them from feeling a

sense of belonging in school?

- **Challenge White-dominate norms in curriculum and pedagogy**

– Are all students' histories and experiences valued in what is taught? Are dominant cultural expectations (e.g., individualism, linear thinking, rigid authority structures) dictating how students are expected to learn?

- **Incorporate multiple ways of knowing and being** – Oral traditions,

experiential learning, storytelling, community-based knowledge, and intergenerational learning are powerful cultural assets that should shape instructional design.

- **Co-create learning experiences**

– Move from teacher-driven instruction to collaborative knowledge-building, where families are viewed as important co-educators and students and families have a voice in shaping their education.

Next Steps for Getting Started

1

Learn More & Reflect

Explore pthvp.org to understand the model and impact of PTHV.

Engage in self-reflection: What biases might influence your perceptions of students and families? How do your own cultural experiences shape your teaching?

2

Gain Support & Build a Team

Discuss PTHV with school leaders and colleagues.

Identify educators willing to **challenge traditional notions about families' roles in school.**

3

Participate in Training

PTHV offers training that prepares educators for **relationship-based home visits** and reflective practice.

Consider how you might **learn and use family input** in culturally responsive ways.

4

Conduct Home Visits & Reflect

Schedule visits in pairs, ensuring equity and trust in the process.

Listen to students and their families during visits, focusing on hopes and dreams as well as interests and assets.

Debrief with your partner, discussing what you've learned about yourself, students and their families, and how you might connect learning to classroom practices

5

Apply Learning

Use insights from home visits to **adjust instructional practices, curriculum, and classroom culture.**

Engage in **ongoing communication and collaboration**, inviting families to share their expertise to **support learning.**

6

Sustain the Work & Challenge the Status Quo

Embed **family and community knowledge** into classroom learning permanently—not just as a one-time effort.

Continue engaging in **mirror and window work**, questioning how school structures may be upholding systemic inequities.

Partner with families to **co-create learning environments where all students thrive.**

By embracing **Parent Teacher Home Visits**, educators have an important tool for helping them to move beyond **surface-level inclusion** to a truly **community-driven approach** to education. This work isn't about **adding diversity into a traditional, White-dominant system**—it's about **dismantling and rebuilding school structures** so that **ALL** students and families are at the center.

Endnotes

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