

PARENT/TEACHER HOME VISIT PROJECT EVALUATION TOOLKIT



**GOFF PEJSA
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INTRODUCTION

Why do evaluation?

Evaluating your local project can help you:

- See and hear about the impact of your project
- Better understand what's working and what's not
- Make improvements and plan for the future
- Communicate with the world about your good work

These tools are meant to be easy, simple, and fit into the flow (as much as possible) of your regular activities. You don't need to be a trained researcher or statistician to evaluate—you just need to have the passion for your program and some processes for checking in and telling your story.

About this toolkit:

This toolkit was designed to give Parent/Teacher Home Visiting Project leaders, coordinators, staff, and volunteers ideas and tools for evaluating your programs. The tips, tools, protocols, and examples included here were developed during a real project evaluation of the St. Paul Federation of Teachers' Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) in St. Paul, MN. The founding national PTHVP organization based on Sacramento, CA was instrumental in funding and supporting the creation of this guide for programs to use across the country.

The first section of the toolkit is focused on introducing the *methods of inquiry*—or ways of gathering information—that may be helpful to your team. For each method, you will find:

- A brief definition and introduction
- Top tips for using in evaluating home visiting programs
- Selected free online resources

Following the methods introduction, you will find the “toolkit” itself—documents that you may borrow, use, and modify for your own unique contexts*. The instruments, tools, templates, and examples were gathered throughout the process of the St. Paul Federation of Teachers' comprehensive 2013-2014 program evaluation. The included tools cover the following:

- Training evaluations & observations
- Teacher surveys
- Home visit observations
- Parent/family interviews
- Debrief sessions, group interviews, & focus groups

* If you do use or adapt this toolkit, please include a note in any publications citing the original source

METHODS OF INQUIRY

**adapted from Haas, Pejsa & Goff (2014). Sexual assault response teams, evaluation, and systems change: A resource for multidisciplinary team leadership. Saint Paul, MN: Sexual Violence Justice Institute, a project of the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault.*

Questionnaires & written surveys

Maybe one of the most familiar information-gathering tools is the written survey. Surveys are best when you:

- need the same information from a lot of people
- most of your questions can be answered by having respondents choose between options, rank a list of options, or quantify something
- want a general idea of attitudes, knowledge, or skills
- are on a limited budget
- seek to report numbers, general themes, and relationships between items

Tips for using surveys with teachers, parents, families

- Have a member of your organization who teaches or who families will recognize and trust send survey invitations and reminders.
- Make sure every question is necessary and will be used. If you aren't going to use the results, do not ask the question.
- Write your questions in the clearest, most simple language possible.
- Make sure each item asks ONE question ("double-barreled" questions ask participants to answer more than one question in the same item. These can be confusing for respondents, make questions unanswerable, and confound results).
- Take the time to pilot your survey or do "think-alouds" with them before sending them out to your whole group. This step will help you to find and fix problems early.
- Take timing into account to get the highest response rate. When surveying teachers, for example, avoid busy, stressful times of the year, such as testing, grades due, or the beginning and end of a semester.

Learn more: free online resources

- Developing Written Questionnaires <http://oerl.sri.com/module/modules.html> Four modules from the professional development series by NSF
- Developing a Survey http://www.innonet.org/resources/files/data_collection_tips_survey.pdf A brief tip sheet for developing an effective survey, using examples
- Essentials of Survey Research and Analysis http://www.innonet.org/resources/files/Guidelines_on_Essentials_of_Survey_Research.pdf A handbook for developing and using surveys
- Survey Response Options <http://dataguru.org/ref/survey/responseoptions.asp> Sets of

response options for survey questions

- Questionnaire Design: Asking Questions with a Purpose
<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/Assets/pdfs/G3658-01.pdf> From University of WI Extension

Observations

Sometimes the best way to understand a situation, dig deeper into an issue, or answer a question is to see it. Observation includes not just watching a person, group, process; but recording and analyzing what you see in a systematic way. Observation is best when you:

- have a “how” or “what” type question
- don’t know a lot about the behavior of people in a particular setting
- feel it is important to study a person, process, or activity in a natural setting
- believe that self-report data (asking people what they do) is likely to be different from actual behavior (what people actually do)

Tips for conducting observations:

- Have a member of your organization who teaches or who families will recognize and trust request observations and make introductions
- Have a clear focus. What questions do you hope to answer with your observations, and what must you observe to get this information?
- Think through the people who may need to give permission or support for your observation to take place. Contact them early, and get them on board with your study before you proceed.
- Clear, easy-to-use checklists and/or observation forms can help you record data efficiently and remind you of what you’re looking for in the field.
- Review field notes, debrief, and reflect on observations as soon as possible, while your mind is fresh.

Learn more: Free Online Resources

- Selecting an Observation Approach <http://oerl.sri.com/module/modules.html> One module from the professional development series by NSF
- Collecting Evaluation Data: Direct Observations
<http://learningstore.uwex.edu/Assets/pdfs/G3658-05.pdf> From University of WI Extension

Individual and group interviews

The versatility of interviewing either individuals or groups is one of the reasons that it is a widely-used tool. But it is important the person or people conducting the interviews is skilled and prepared. Interviews are best when you:

- want a deeper understanding of people’s attitudes, knowledge, or perspectives
- have access to people who will give you time: parents, family members, teachers, or program staff
- have people on your team who are comfortable and willing to interview
- want to report words: themes, quotes, and/or stories

Focus groups are one specific type of group interview. For more information about focus groups, including their appropriate use and methods for interpreting their findings, please see the free resource list at the end of this section

Tips for using interviews:

- Prepare a clear statement that explains the purpose of your interview and how you will use it.
- Inform interviewees of their rights—that they can stop the interview at any time, they don’t need to answer any question they don’t want to answer, and that their responses will be confidential (if appropriate).
- Make sure every question you ask is necessary and will be used. If you aren’t going to use the results, do not ask the question.
- Take the time to practice your interview with a trusted colleague or friend who will give you honest feedback. This step will help you to find and fix problems with your questions and delivery before the real interview(s).
- Don’t be afraid of silence during an interview. Stop and wait. Give interviewees time and space to respond.
- Make the interview as convenient as possible for your interviewees. Families can be interviewed in their homes, workplaces, or over the phone. Already scheduled meetings, trainings, or professional development days are good times to reach teachers.

Interview Analysis & Reporting Tips

- Read through all of the interview transcripts (or listen to the tapes, read the notes) and note things that jump out at you or things that seem to be coming up over and over. This will get you thinking about possible themes.
- Look for existing themes you would hope to hear/see. In the case of the SPFT PTHVP, we were looking for the four non-negotiables of the home visit project and the theme of “changing assumptions.”
- What are the other themes, beyond these, that come up in the interviews? Note them and see how many times they are raised in interviews.
- Do several readings/listenings. Use your list of possible themes to “code” words, phrases, thoughts, etc. according to categories/themes.
- Compare your codes and themes to what it actually felt like to be there in the context as the

interviewer. Do the words match up with your observations? What additional information might you need to add as an observer to give the words the right context or feeling?

- Highlight and pull out any quotations that really help illustrate your themes or important message about the program. You can use these as evidence for the themes in your reporting. They are also great to have for marketing and communications purposes.

Learn more: Free Online Resources

- The Use of Qualitative Interviews in Evaluation <http://ag.arizona.edu/sfcs/cyfernet/cyfar/Intervu5.htm> A guide in qualitative interviewing from Meg Sewell at the University of Arizona, Tucson and Children, Youth and Families Education Research Network (CYFERnet). Includes bibliography.
- Developing Interviews <http://oerl.sri.com/module/modules.html> Two modules from the professional development series by NSF.
- Qualitative Researching with Text, Images, and Sound has a chapter on individual and group interviewing <http://srmo.sagepub.com/view/qualitative-researching-with-text-image-and-sound/n3.xml> that provides guidelines for selecting participants and preparing for interviews.
- This resource: <http://ag.arizona.edu/sfcs/cyfernet/cyfar/focus.htm> does a great job of describing the unique features of **focus groups** that differentiate this method from other group interview techniques or situations.

TRAINING EVALUATION & OBSERVATION

Tips & Tools included:

- Sample training evaluation form

TEACHER SURVEYS

Tips & Tools included:

- Sample teacher survey
- Sample teacher email communication

Parent/Teacher Home Visit Experience Survey

Saint Paul Federation of Teachers and the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project would like to learn about the how teachers experience home visits and understand more about the impact that these visits have on families and schools. Please respond to this short survey about your experiences with home visits. The data collected in this survey is anonymous and will help us to understand and improve the program. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

* Required

Approximately how many home visits have you made? *

This should include the total visits over multiple years, if applicable.

Did making a home visit change your assumptions about parents? *

- Yes
- No

How did your assumptions about parents change?

Did making a home visit teach you something about your students that you did not know? *

- Yes
- No

How did what you learned help you to teach your students more effectively?

How do you think the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Program impacts the relationship between teachers and families? *

What were some other impacts of the program?

How important were the following elements of the home visit program to your experience?*

The Parent/Teacher Home Visit Program is based on a set of nonnegotiable elements: Everyone is trained, visits are done in pairs, relationship building is the purpose of the first visit, visits are compensated, and the visit is voluntary for the school staff and the families

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Very important	Not applicable
Pre-visit training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The voluntary nature of the program for teachers and families	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The fact that you are compensated for visits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making the visits with a partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The debrief session	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments about any elements of the program?

How could the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project better support your work in developing parent teacher partnerships?

May we use your anonymous answers to these questions in promotional materials? *

- Yes
- No

SAMPLE TEACHER
SURVEY EMAIL
COMMUNICATION

SURVEYS

Sample email communications to teachers encouraging them to take the survey

Your Input is Needed!

In the next week or two you will receive an invitation from _____ to take a short survey on the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project and your experience with the training and visiting. It is a short survey that will be part of a number of activities that we are engaging in with these evaluators to give us feedback on how to make this the strongest possible program for our teachers and families.

Please look for the survey and take a moment to complete it when it arrives in your email.

Thanks!

.....

Your Help is needed!

Before everyone heads off for Spring Break...

....please take 10 minutes and complete the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project Survey. It is an important part of our evaluation of the project and will give us feedback on what is working and what is not working.

The survey can be found at:

<https://survey.url>

Thank you!

HOME VISIT OBSERVATIONS

Tips & Tools included:

- Sample email requesting to observe a home visit
- Sample Observation Checklist

SAMPLE HOME
VISIT OBSERVATION
EMAIL
COMMUNICATION

OBSERVATIONS

Sample email communications to teachers requesting that a visit be observed

Even experienced home visiting teachers might be nervous about being observed on a visit. It will help with the recruitment process to have someone inside of the visiting organization or school send a note to teachers requesting that they take an observer along. Here is an example of an effective message:

Hello Folks,

I'm writing because you are some of our home visitors who have been pretty consistent in doing visits over past years, or you are someone who really went out and did quite a few this fall already on your first year. Our outside evaluators would like to go on some home visits to help us evaluate the needs of the program and I'm writing you personally to see if you could arrange one or two for them to go along on. Their names are _____ and one of them could come along at your request as a second.

All you would have to do is schedule the home visit, and let me know the time. I would contact them and one of them would meet you at your school and head over to the home with you, or meet you somewhere else convenient for you.

I hope you'll consider this request, as it will be a great help in us producing the best, most supportive project possible. We want to keep improving our efforts so the feedback is for that purpose.

Thanks,

SAMPLE HOME
VISIT OBSERVATION
FORM

OBSERVATIONS

This form should not be brought to the visit observation but could be used AFTER the visit to collect consistent notes about visits.

Your Name:

Name of visiting teacher(s):

Date:

Student Name:

Who is present during the visit (other family members or friends of the family, etc.)?

Were the following “non-negotiable” aspects of the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project observed? Add comments after each item

“No paper.” The visit was focused on relationship building and families’ hopes and dreams.

Voluntary for both teacher and family

Visit happened with a partner

Was there any indication that the family was chosen for a visit for a particular reason? If so, for what reason?

Other observations about the visit?

PARENT/FAMILY INTERVIEWS

Tips & Tools included:

- Sample information & consent script
- Interview questions/protocol

SAMPLE
PARENT/FAMILY
INTERVIEW
PROTOCOL

INTERVIEWS

Parent/Family Interview Protocol

Parent /Teacher Home Visit Project

Suggested Introduction and Consent Script

Before we begin, I would just like to tell you a little bit more about why I am here talking with you today. I am working with the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project to help them understand how families experience home visits and how they might communicate about and improve the program. I'm talking to both teachers and families to find out how it's going, and what we should do to make it even better.

I just have a few questions for you about your experience. Your honest answers are appreciated, but if you would prefer not to answer or talk about any question, that's okay. Everything you say will be anonymous, so we will not share your name or details about you unless you give us permission. If we ever do want to share your comments, connected to your name, with anyone, we will ask you first.

Does this all sound okay to you?



Suggested Closing and Consent Reminder Script

Thank you so much for giving me your time today. Your willingness to give us your feedback means a lot to the program. I just want to say, again, that everything we talked about here will only be shared anonymously, without your name. If we want to use a quote or story with your name attached, we will ask you first. If you think of anything else you would like to share, or if you have any questions, you can contact me at: XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Thanks again!

Interview Questions

1. Tell me/us about your home visit.

Prompts: What was it like to have a teacher in your home? What did you do? What types of things did you talk about?

2. Was the visit what you expected? Why or why not?

3. Did the home visit experience change any of your thoughts and feelings about: your child's teacher? Your child's school? Your child?

4. Have you had contact or conversations with your teacher or school that you might not have had before the visit?

Prompt: Do you do things now that you might not have done before the visit?

5. Do you have any suggestions or ideas for us about how to improve the program?

6. Is there anything else you would like to share or tell us?

DEBRIEF SESSIONS & GROUP INTERVIEWS

Tips & Tools included:

- Sample Debrief Session Protocol
- Sample Group Interview Script

SAMPLE DEBRIEF SESSION PROTOCOL

DEBRIEF SESSIONS & GROUP INTERVIEWS

The purposes of these debrief sessions are to:

- provide an opportunity for participating teachers to engage in reflective practice around family engagement;
- provided additional training on family engagement/home visiting strategies from SPFT trainers/facilitators, guest, speakers, and fellow teachers;
- gather stories/data from teachers' experiences in the field to be used by SPFT to improve programming and report/communicate the project's impact; and
- share family perceptions, issues, and feedback on the Teacher Home Visiting Project, schools, and the school district and strategize ways to improve families' experiences.

The process

Debrief sessions should be held at regular and convenient intervals, either at a central location for teachers from all over the district, or on-site at a school with a large number of participating teachers. Snacks and beverages can make participants more comfortable and more likely to participate. A member (or members) of the sponsoring organization training team can facilitate the sessions. Typically, the sessions have the following components:

- Social/gathering time
- Introductions, ice breakers
- Training topic on a subject that is relevant for program participants
- Debrief/reflection on home visiting (an effective technique for reflection is to have participants discuss first in small groups, then share back to the large group):
 - Your biggest “aha” or learning from home visiting was...
 - Your biggest risk in home visiting was...
 - Would you do it again? Why or why not?
- Sharing feedback and issues from families about topics outside of the home visit program (these are discussed and, if applicable, brought to project/school/district/union leadership)
- Brief update on upcoming family engagement training/professional development
- Closing

A note taker separate from the facilitator can be present to observe and document the debrief session. The same process for interpreting interview and observation data should be used in order to communicate the information gathered through these debrief sessions.

SAMPLE GROUP INTERVIEW SCRIPT

DEBRIEF SESSIONS & GROUP INTERVIEWS

Questions for Teachers: Debriefs, Group Interviews, or Focus Groups

1. Tell me/us about your home visit experiences.

*Prompts: Have you had an experience that stands out as particularly good? Why?
Have you had an experience that stands out as particularly bad? Why?*

2. Was there anything that you wished that you would have heard or learned in the pre-visit training that would have better prepared you for a visit?

3. Did the home visit experience change any of your thoughts and feelings about the parents or children that you work with? How?

4. How has making home visits changed the way that you feel about teaching in general?

Prompt: Has it changed your relationship with colleagues that participate in the program or others in your school?

5. What do you think that the biggest impact of this program is for teachers? What about for families?

6. Do you have any suggestions or ideas for us about how to improve the program?

7. Is there anything else you would like to share or tell us?