25 YEARS OF IMPACT

25 Stories that Have Shaped a Movement to Build Relational Trust Between Schools and Families

1998 – 2023
Parent Teacher Home Visits (PTHV) is a high-impact family engagement strategy designed to build trusting home-school partnerships centered on shared hopes and dreams. Recent studies reveal that PTHV’s model for relational home visits strengthens relationships, shifts mindsets, improves teaching, and bolsters student outcomes. These studies also reiterate how critically important implementation fidelity is to realize the full potential the model offers. To learn more about the PTHV Model, the evidence base for it, and how to bring it to your school community, visit https://pthvp.org/.
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PTHV Mission, Vision, &amp; Values</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Highlights &amp; Timeline</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories of Impact</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTHV Network Map</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories of Impact</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th Anniversary Impact Dashboard</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories of Impact</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Staff</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th Anniversary Sponsors &amp; Individual Donors</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support PTHV</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are your hopes & dreams for your child?
ABOUT
PARENT TEACHER HOME VISITS

Twenty-five years ago, parent and community organizers joined forces with educators to pilot a relational home visit model, Parent Teacher Home Visits (PTHV), at eight Sacramento, California, schools in an effort to counter deeply held mistrust and disrupt the cycle of blame between home and school. Success and significant media attention fueled rapid growth, and an organization was born. In the intervening years, PTHV expanded to more than 700 communities across 28 states and the District of Columbia, and a recent pilot in Saskatchewan marked the first time the model was practiced in a school district outside of the United States. Looking forward, we hope to leverage our core values, non-negotiable practices, and evidence base to accelerate our goal of a home visit for every learner. PTHV works. Everywhere.

Mission

PTHV advances student success and school improvement by leveraging relationships, research, and a national network of partners to advance evidence-based practices in relational home visits within a comprehensive family engagement strategy.

Vision

To fundamentally change what it means to teach and learn for every student, family, and educator through the transformative power of trusting relationships.

Values

We believe:

- Home visits nurture human dignity and promote equity in educators, families, and students.
- Honoring community wisdom and the assets of parents and families is critical.
- Schools have a responsibility to actively seek relationships with all families.
- People are capable of change and our assumptions can and should be challenged.
- A fundamental shift in the relationship between educators and families is necessary to transform systems, communities, and schools.
In 1998, parents from a low-income neighborhood in Sacramento, California, used community organizing principles to develop a strategy intended to build trust and accountability between parents and teachers, interrupting a cycle of blaming each other for low student achievement. The home visit is a voluntary meeting between two equal partners with common goals, in a setting away from the institutional power of the school. On a first home visit, families and school staff ask and answer a simple but profound question, “What are your hopes and dreams for your child?”

The model was refined with teacher and community allies, and a pilot project was created with the support of a unique collaboration between the local school district, SCUSD, the teachers’ union, SCTA, and the community organizing group that originally galvanized the parents, Sacramento ACT. The project evolved into a nonprofit, today known as Parent Teacher Home Visits, and word about the power of home visits spread beyond Sacramento. Our founding parents and teachers responded to hundreds of requests to train communities like theirs, from Alaska to Florida, in rural, suburban, and urban districts across the United States, and now in Canada. As our model was adapted and adopted by widely diverse communities, we developed five non-negotiable core practices that, when followed, maintain the integrity and impact of this relational, capacity-building approach.

1998
Grassroots Organizing
A profound lack of trust and a vicious cycle of blame between families and schools pervaded a community in South Sacramento. A willing group of parents and teachers decided to try home visits to facilitate open conversation and relationship-building.

1998-1999
Training Development & Pilot
The group developed a training for teachers to empower them to engage with the community. Sacramento Area Congregations Together (ACT), Sacramento City Teachers Association, and the Sacramento City Unified School District worked together and agreed to have ACT provide the training. A pilot launched in eight schools.

1999-2000
Expansion
The pilot expanded to 14 schools, as word of early success spread fast. New partners came on board. A community in Denver, Colorado, was experiencing similar issues with lack of communication and trust between families and schools. A chance connection put them in touch with Sacramento organizers, who prepared a special training. This paved the way for PTHVP to become a national organization.

2001
Nell Soto Funding
Under a $15 million initiative signed by the governor, schools throughout California could now apply for state money to pay teachers for overtime spent visiting students’ homes. This included additional funding for PTHV to train in other districts. Demand surged.

2002
Nonprofit Established
Parent Teacher Home Visit Project incorporated as a nonprofit organization and established a local governing board.

2005
Union Partnership
By this time, the NEA and the AFT were fully invested in the home visit strategy and were enabling participation in locals across the nation.

2007
Learning & Networking
PTHVP began a series of annual convenings, gathering home visit leaders from around the nation to share ideas and learn from one another.

2008
Evidence & Sustainability
The national board developed the first five-year strategic plan. The organization also launched a national evaluation of the PTHVP model with Johns Hopkins University and RTI International.

2020-2021
COVID Innovation
The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in unexpected changes to the home visit practice. The staff developed a virtual model of home visits, which enabled 26,507 total home visits during unprecedented times.

2022
Going International
After a training, schools in Saskatchewan, Canada, began a home visit pilot, marking the first time the model was practiced in schools outside of the United States.

2023
A Milestone & New Directions
PTHV turned 25! Work began to highlight PTHV as a foundation on which equitable, liberatory practices in schools can flourish, as well as to provide a system of support to sustain local practices.
At this global inflection point in education—in which we're consumed with the urgency of recovery and the imperative for equity—the work often feels confined within the walls of the school building. But there exists a transformative force that bridges the gap between home and school. It is the power of Parent Teacher Home Visits, where the seeds of partnership, understanding, and trust are sown.

This volume is a collection of 25 captivating stories that illuminate the profound impact of these visits, weaving together narratives from teachers, parents, researchers, advocates, principals, superintendents, and other community leaders who have experienced the remarkable transformations that occur where home visits are practiced.

Within these pages, you will embark on a journey that transcends the ordinary and embraces the extraordinary.

Each story brings to life the myriad ways Parent Teacher Home Visits have revolutionized the educational landscape. These narratives unfold with honesty, vulnerability, and hope, showcasing the power of human connection to empower both schools and communities. Whether it’s breaking down cultural barriers, addressing learning challenges, or nurturing a child’s hopes and dreams, the stories contained herein serve as a testament to the profound impact that can be achieved when school staff step beyond the traditional boundaries and power dynamics of school and reach into the hearts and homes of their students.

*Note: Most of the stories have been condensed for publishing. You can find all 25 full-length stories on the PTHV Blog at [https://pthvp.org/tag/impact-story/](https://pthvp.org/tag/impact-story/)
YESenia Ramirez
Parent Teacher Home Visits

There’s a Magic that Happens

Parent Teacher Home Visits is an organization that celebrates the power of discovering the hopes and dreams that families and educators have for their students. It is a question that sparks the seeds of partnership between the most important adults in a child’s life. We owe this evidence-based practice in great measure to the experiences of Yesenia Ramirez, PTHV co-founder and now senior advisor.

Though she’s humble about her incredible legacy of changing the trajectory of hundreds of thousands of students who have received home visits, it’s challenging for her to describe what her own hopes and dreams were when she was a child. She waxes wistful, and then delivers the raw truth that educators who’ve been trained by her have come to know and respect and admire.

“Coming from a background where you’re being raised in a home where there’s a lot of abuse, it’s kind of hard to think about hopes and dreams for yourself,” she said. “I was just trying to survive every day. As I got older, my hope was just to be able to figure out how I could get out of the situation that I was in.”

After a little reflection, she remembers wanting to style hair, and she once dreamt of traveling to different places to learn how to do hair professionally. Later, it was to become a history teacher because that, too, meant traveling to learn about the world. Alas, traveling was always a proxy for escaping her abusive father. She would take the long way home from school and hide out in certain sections of the neighborhood where she would go unnoticed, all to avoid returning home. Escape would come in her teenage years when she married young to be able to leave home. But that also meant leaving school, 17 and pregnant. And as is often the case, the cycle of abuse continued in her marriage.

“I did feel that my only way out was to be married because I didn’t have the resources. I didn’t have the education. I didn’t have the means to have those dreams come true.”

The Seeds of Hope

Hope seemed lost for Yesenia for a long time, but when she had her daughters, she began to dream again, this time for a successful future for them. With support, she relocated to Sacramento to build a new life. It wasn’t long before she realized that one of her daughters was struggling academically. Her daughter was in the fifth grade but reading at a first-grade level. Yesenia was at first fearful, being new to the area, and not having any contacts, she wasn’t sure what to do. But she was adamant that her children were going to do better in life.

The trouble was, she didn’t understand the language the school was using. Code words, like “low income,” were bandied about and she didn’t understand what that meant and why it mattered when she went to the school for assistance. She simply wanted to be equipped to help her daughter with her homework and be a positive guide for the younger daughters coming up behind her. Yesenia was also afraid to ask for help because she feared her talking with authority figures would somehow result in her daughters being taken away from her. She mustered up the courage to go to the school anyway and to acknowledge that she didn’t know how to help her child. And she sat in an office for 45 minutes, without a soul asking her what she was there for.

“As I was walking out, I was cussing in Spanish,” she recalls, and at the moment she was leaving, the new vice principal...
overheard her and asked her what was wrong. “I completely broke down. I told her this was the second time I was here, and no one will talk to me, and I just need help for my Joanna. Nobody's listening.”

That unearthed a long discussion about parent engagement in the school, and how the school was struggling to connect with the community. Internally, there was a pervasive belief that parents were doing the bare minimum of bringing their kids to school and picking them up in the afternoon. A tragic 0.8 percent of students were reading on grade level at the school. There was a belief that the parents in the community were drug addicts or dealers or engaged in some criminal vice that kept them from being more engaged in the school. But the vice principal said there were other parents who were experiencing the same thing as Yesenia, of trying to get help and not getting it. The vice principal had made it her duty to resolve this disconnect, and she enlisted the support of Sacramento ACT (Area Congregations Together). Two other parents, PTHV’s other co-founders, the late Jocelyn Graves, and Sandy Johnson, joined forces and helped facilitate building stronger relationships between the school staff (who Yesenia said “wanted absolutely nothing to do with us”) and families of children attending the school. There was a resource teacher and another educator who joined in and began offering their personal time to Yesenia, Sandy, and Jocelyn, coaching them on helping their kids, a version of the Academic Parent Teacher Teams model.

Next came a quick lesson in community organizing, with Sacramento ACT showing this growing body of parents how to assess problems, identify who had the power to fix them, and come up with strategies to create change. They cleaned up the neighborhood, had abandoned cars removed, and worked on several service projects of that sort, when Yesenia returned to the initial problem of trying to resolve the disconnect between school staff and the parents in the community. At the heart of grassroots organizing is the one-on-one, a conversation you have with someone to build a relationship of trust, identify common grievances and shared interests, and move from deadlock to action. Organizers began a conversation of “what ifs.” What if we could do one-on-ones with the teachers? What if we invited teachers into the homes of parents (to shift power away from the school building) and have conversations and, “just figure out what are their hopes and dreams? What are they wanting for their students?”

Fun fact: the idea of one-on-ones between teachers and parents was the brain child of Gina Martinez-Keddy, now executive director of Parent Teacher Home Visits, then an early-career organizer who trained parents in community organizing while at Sacramento Act.

“My first reaction: I said, no, no, absolutely not,” Yesenia recalls. “I wouldn't want anybody from the school in my home because my fear, again, was they're gonna come into my house. They're gonna judge me. They're gonna come and see how I live. They're gonna come and see if my house is clean. What if I'm not the parent that they want me to be for my girls? They'll call CPS and they'll come and take my girls away. I was willing to do anything else, but I was terrified to have them come into my house.”

Gina listened intently, and then she asked Yesenia, why? Why are you afraid of them coming to your home and talking to you. “I told her why. And she said, ‘but you let me come.’ And I remember looking at her and telling her, ‘but I trust you. I trust you.’

“And she said, ‘well, that’s exactly what we’re gonna try to do. We’re gonna try to build trust.’”

The Birth of PTHV

From there, Yesenia and Jocelyn conducted one-on-ones with parents in the community first, more than 150 of them, and then focus groups with schools to determine what the needs were and how to build a bridge between families
and schools. This work went on for two years, and in time mobilized more teachers and principals from other schools to join in the effort. From there, the groups went to the teachers’ union, who “were amazed by all the work we had done with the community organization and loved the model we created.” The union pledged its support.

The next step was to take results of the research, one-on-ones, focus groups, newly formed core practices and present the idea to the superintendent of schools, then Dr. Jim Sweeney. That first visit went a lot like Yesenia's early visits to the school. He wouldn’t meet with the group, so they returned the next day and he agreed to see them. He heard their ideas about home visits, about how members of the community, including families and teachers and others had told them what they needed from the schools, and how home visits, modeled after one-on-ones would be a revolutionary solution.

The superintendent thought the union would not agree to teachers going into families’ homes, but Yesenia let him know they already had union buy-in. They were there to get support to pilot the home visits project, and they wanted a commitment that educators would be compensated for their time when they conducted home visits. Yesenia and her colleagues invited the superintendent to a community meeting to discuss the plan in detail. More than 2,000 families came. They challenged him to go on home visits, and requested $100,000 to conduct the initial pilot. He agreed to do 20 home visits, but didn't agree to the money right away.

“By the fifth visit, he totally got what we were talking about. He said he saw the power in it, and that’s how we launched in those first eight schools.

“I never dreamed that it would last this long. To me, it was something that Jocelyn and I worked very hard on because we wanted to make a difference, and we did.”

Yesenia’s dear friend and partner in building what would become Parent Teacher Home Visits suffered from an illness throughout the years they conducted home visits and launched the pilot. Knowing her days might not be long, Jocelyn told Yesenia, that this work was “going to be something that one day somebody is going to remember us by, so we have to keep going.” And to a great extent, it has been in Jocelyn's honor that Yesenia has stayed with PTHV for all 25 of these years.

“Jocelyn once said to me, ‘We have to prove people wrong. It’s not true that just because we live in a low-income community, our children can’t learn.’”

That conversation was a catalyst for re-imagining what the future of her community could be like. It started with a very real and personal challenge to support her children, but became a responsibility to help all the children in the neighborhood and beyond who bore the brunt of stereotypes, biases, and other differences.

“I was fortunate to be taught by a wonderful group of community organizers who taught me that I could be a leader, and my job was to create other leaders. The mission became bigger. I didn't expect this to get out of Sacramento, but then I thought we could make a difference in California, and then other states came to us wanting to do Parent Teacher Home Visits.”

Parent Teacher Home Visits has made a real impact on K-12 education. “It has connected and empowered parents in places where no family engagement was taking place. It has taught them they have what it takes to engage in their child's education.”

PTHV introduced very powerful conversations around assumptions and biases, long before the movement for educational equity entered the lexicon, Yesenia recalls. We made it practical and accessible for schools and families to have courageous conversations and hold each other accountable in meaningful ways.

“I also think strongly especially now, after all these years, and I'm a testament of, is that Parent Teacher Home Visits has given education a way of saving our children. It has saved our kids just by coming into the home and building trusting relationships with families and students. Even if that trust doesn't happen immediately, there's this magic that happens when a student has the opportunity to go back to the school and feel comfortable talking with those two educators that were at their home. None of that had existed before.”

I said, no, no, absolutely not. I wouldn’t want anybody from the school in my home because my fear, again, was they’re gonna come into my house. They’re gonna judge me.
I had been a teacher for 11 years, one year in Fresno and 10 years in Sacramento. In my 12th year of teaching, I began working at one of the priority schools in the Sacramento City Unified District where I first heard about Parent Teacher Home Visits.

As a priority school, we were taking on lots of new strategies to try to engage our families and build connection and community between the school and home. The first strategy we were trained in was Parent Teacher Home Visits in 2010. It just made sense to me. Before I knew about the formal home visit model, I knew the importance of connecting with my students’ families. I was the teacher who was always invited to soccer games, birthday parties, and even baby showers.

At the time we got our training, we were a brand new staff at a very small school. We figured out who we wanted to partner with, and our strategy was to visit as many students as we could. We literally went down our class list, called the families, and whoever said yes, we would visit them. Whoever said no, we would revisit the question with the family next time.

I remember a special visit with a student named Elise. And her mom, Miss Alicia, would bring her daughter to school, and she’d stand in line and wait to say hi. We developed an easy rapport, and eventually, I approached her about the idea of doing a home visit. She agreed. You know, every home visit is different, so you don’t know what to expect. I can laugh now at what happened. It wasn’t just Alicia and her mom there; it was the whole family: dad, siblings, grandma—the living room was full. We were talking and getting to know each other. We talked about hopes and dreams. Miss Alicia had prepared dinner, even though upfront we said we would only be there about 30 minutes, so we said please don’t go to any trouble.

So we sat down to have dinner, and it was a lovely steak and green beans, and I believe a baked potato or mashed potatoes. I honed in on the steak and the green beans because even though I like to eat, those are the two foods I do not like—at all. I used to tell this story in trainings, I’d pause right there, and people would ask, “What did you do? Did you eat it? Did you say no?” And I would say, “No, that night, I ate steak, green beans, and baked potato.” Even though I would rather not, it’s just a preference, and I felt strongly that I needed to honor her time and honor the fact that she thought enough of me that she wanted to present me with that meal.

After that, Miss Alicia became a regular—a staple, really—in our classroom, helping out and chaperoning field trips, and pretty much anything I asked her to do.

Students grew, too, as a result of home visits. I remember in particular, their writing became stronger. I think it was because the ideas that we were able to come up with were generated oftentimes from something that I learned in a home visit. As an example, I learned that one of my students whom I visited was an avid wrestling fan. After that, I made sure there were books in the library now that he could read about different wrestlers. I learned who John Cena was, I didn’t know before then. So from an academic standpoint, home visits made students and their families more engaged and willing to have conversations about academics. My work as an educator then was to tap into students’ interests to really help them in their development. Home visits made me a more connected educator. I was able to make learning more relevant for my students just by talking about something we learned in a home visit, like their pets, sports, or their grandparents. It was across the board, whether the students were the littles or the bigs.

From the practice of home visits, I learned that all families, no matter what, have a hope and a dream for their students. It can be as simple as wanting their students to finish high school because maybe that was something that they didn’t get a chance to do or never happened in their family all the way up to wanting their child to go to Harvard. It always made me remember that our families have the same hopes and dreams that I had for my kids when I was raising them, and so together, we’re helping the kids get on the path to realizing those dreams.
I am an assistant principal at Superior Middle School in Superior, Wisconsin. I learned about and started doing home visits at Lincoln Park Middle School in Duluth, Minnesota. We started doing home visits after we read an article in late 2015 about what St. Paul Public Schools was doing with PTHV, and we thought the model looked great. A few St. Paul teachers came up and trained us on how to do home visits, made us understand the importance of those visits, and shared their wonderful stories and experiences. The first thing that sold me on home visits was they sounded fun, and I felt motivated to jump in on it.

I grew up with a parent who was a teacher, so I was used to having teachers come over to my house all the time and having them be a bit more involved in my life than many of my colleagues. So when I understood how the home visits worked, it sounded great. Plus, in training, we discussed all the different worries teachers typically have about doing home visits, which made me feel all the more comfortable. I also liked the idea of going with a colleague. I didn't realize before then how much I would learn about my colleagues. I became very good friends with another teacher with whom I have done many home visits. All of us got to know each other better by getting to know our families together.

One home visit that stands out to me was when I was teaching eighth grade. It turned out that the student lived right around the corner from where I was living at the time, and she and her family agreed to the visit and allowed us to record the home visit for a feature piece by AFT. What I remember was just how many people were there—different family members—coming in and out of the room. They were all interested in what was happening, and as we talked, we got to know each of them on a more personal level. It was easy to see how much work everyone in the family was putting in for the student. Everyone had different hopes, dreams, and goals for her. She would be going to high school the next year, and she could clearly express all the things she needed to do to achieve her goals to be successful in high school.

COVID also created some great memories for me. I was grateful for the opportunity to continue home visits virtually. That was a very powerful experience to be able to meet families in a safe way. It was such a special way to spend time with students in ways that we couldn't in person. And to be honest, during some of those home visits, that was the first time I got to see some of those students.

I was a sixth-grade teacher during most of my home visits. One thing that struck me—especially since COVID—is the number of families that hope their kids will make new friends and try new things. It's funny because the kids always seemed surprised when their parents expressed that as their hope and dream. They expect to hear things about grades and doing well in school. So just like I got to see my colleagues in a new light doing home visits, some of my students saw their parents in a new light.

The biggest impact I've seen from home visits is in me. I've learned that all parents want great things for their kids. I've learned so much from seeing them talk about similar things and have similar dreams. Regardless of what we see in the classroom, every parent has things they want for their kids. Home visits have been the best thing in helping me understand equity personally because seeing how different these families might be, yet want similar things for their kids, has helped me on that journey.

When it comes to students, I know that it has made them feel more comfortable in my classrooms and my colleagues' classrooms. I've seen them and myself change based on what we know about students and try to include even those little things we know about them now. It all makes a big difference, and I appreciate this. We take what we learn on home visits back to our teams, and they all use this information. Everyone knows better how to connect with kids, and this makes a huge difference in their willingness to try and work together in their classrooms.
A Q&A WITH DR. KAREN MAPP
Harvard University

Q: Dr. Mapp, how did you come to learn about Parent Teacher Home Visits, and how did you get involved?

Dr. Mapp: Anne Henderson and I had come to Sacramento in the early years and met Carrie (former executive director of PTHV). We had a meeting with PICO, and they were formulating the idea that became the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project, which was based on an organizing platform of one-on-one meetings. One-on-one meetings have a particular dynamic where you come in respectfully. You come in with a solidarity mindset. From that dynamic and culture, Parent Teacher Home Visits was born. We learned how it would work.

Another time, I came back and went on some visits with Yesenia and Carrie. I went on a high school home visit and an elementary school visit. I also got to witness a meeting in which a teacher talked with a student about the visit. I was just sold because, of course, my research was all about how you build relational trust with families. People had been asking me, “Okay, we get the concept of relational trust, but how do we put that into action in real-time? How do we cultivate relational trust?” I felt like the home visit model that Parent Teacher Home Visits was using was the way to go. As we all know, there are a lot of different kinds of home visits. They’re not done with the kind of respect toward family voice that PTHV’s are.

Q: Tell us what you remember of those early home visits. What did you learn, and what impacted you?

Dr. Mapp: Well I had done my doctoral thesis on a school in Boston where home visits were a part of what they did. Now, they didn’t know about the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project at the time, but they had the same kind of relational visit as their core purpose. Then I think they were introduced to the model coming out of Sacramento, and they just folded that in. Their principal was also an organizer and Peace Corps guy. He had this kind of Paulo Freirean mindset about the importance of seeing people as people and treating people with respect. So I was very interested in this whole concept of trust and trust-building. When I saw the model out of Sacramento, I felt it was an excellent way to operationalize the building of trust between families and educators. So when I went on those home visits, I actually paid a lot of attention to the teachers and how they were when they went on these visits.

The parents were just floored with the care and the love, and the respect. I remember that very well. It was very powerful to see how very quickly those years of distrust and trauma that some families experience at the hands of schools all evaporated when there was a home visit.

I also saw home visits that weren’t done in the home. I saw home visits that were done in other places, like libraries, and in one case, a home visit at a McDonald’s. Here in Boston, the Lee K-8 school had adopted the Parent Teacher Home Visit model, so I got to see even more home visits with those teachers. I remember the powerful impact those visits had on the teachers. Many of them said that a lot of the biases and misconceptions that they had about families were completely destroyed when they went on home visits. They were very emotional. They would cry and talk about how they realized how they had biases against these parents and thought the parents didn’t care. And then, when they went to the homes and heard the parents talk about their commitment to education, it was really mind-blowing for a lot of these teachers.

Q: Let’s stay with teachers for a moment and talk about their professional development. What do you think needs to be done to better support teachers to understand family engagement?

Dr. Mapp: It’s important to train our next generation of educators to do this work in a way that’s effective. We know from research that what effective means is that there’s a relational component that has to be embedded into this practice. I think that anything that
organizations can do to work with the next generation of educators, whether in a teacher prep program or leadership prep program to introduce these concepts and these effective practices is really important. You know, a lot of teachers talk about being scared of families because no one ever trained them on how to do this work. Nobody ever advised them. And, quite frankly, they’re nervous about it. So anything any of our organizations can do to be there for those new educators to show them the way is critical.

I have a course on family and community engagement, and PTHV is definitely one of the things that we talk about. Students need to be exposed to research, theories, the various frameworks, you know Kathy Hoover-Dempsey, Joyce Epstein, for a good foundation. And then what I do is introduce Parent Teacher Home Visits to them as a strategy. I say, “Okay, you’re going to take these theories, along with the Dual Capacity-Building Framework, and you’re going to put them into practice. Now let’s talk about some practice models that embrace all the theories we’ve talked about.”

Q: As you’ve witnessed the origin and evolution of Parent Teacher Home Visits, do you have hopes and dreams for the future of the organization? For the future of the practice? What do you see when you look 25 years ahead?

Dr. Mapp: Sometimes, I see that people don’t understand Parent Teacher Home Visits is a model, and that it has components to it. I’ve seen people take the idea, and they decide they’re not going to do one part of it or another. They are not following the non-negotiables. They say, “We’re going to do this, or we’re not going to do that.” The next thing you know, it’s not the model, and it’s not done with fidelity. They don’t understand the importance of this as a relational practice. They see it as a way to basically inform families of things—not a two-way kind of conversation with families. I’d like to see more done in this area to ensure fidelity and ensure that teachers and schools understand the power of each one of those steps. I’ve been to the training, and it’s very powerful. Just the conversation in the training around difference and respecting difference is so important. You can’t just hear about home visits and run out and try it. You have to have some training, and you have to set it up to be practiced with fidelity.

I have two reasons for being engaged with Parent Teacher Home Visits for many years—one’s personal and one’s professional. I work for the National Education Association (NEA), and we have a long organizational history with PTHV. I direct the Center for Professional Excellence and Student Learning within NEA, and we know how vital family engagement is to student learning.

Parent Teacher Home Visits is an organization that NEA endorses in our community schools work; we partner with parents for future home visits, and we stand behind PTHV’s methodologies. I love how PTHV empowers educators to visit families in pairs and encourages not just teachers but educational support professionals as well. So it’s an easy organization to partner with professionally, and NEA has done exciting work with PTHV over the years. I’ve also seen my colleagues’ outstanding work with Parent Teacher Home Visits. So it was a no-brainer to join the PTHV board. It’s an absolute privilege to be involved and support this work and that vision for quality education.

Before I worked at NEA, I was a teacher for a long time, and I can speak to the power of home visits. I taught in middle school. It was a beautifully diverse middle school, just all kinds of students and families, and a large refugee population. While I was there, we had a significant influx of Ukrainian and Moldovan immigrants, a population I didn’t know much about. Some of the Ukrainian boys were getting into a lot of trouble. One day I was down in the principal’s office, and one of the boys’ mother had come in. I was just chatting with her, and she asked, “Can you come over and
have dinner at our house, Mr. Coons?” Imagine my surprise, but I said okay!

My wife and I showed up; we had made a plate of brownies and set out to visit this home. It was such an eye-opener for me as an educator. We went into a tiny apartment with a family of 10 children. We ate with them and afterward, we ended up sitting with the dad. He showed us pictures of their home in Ukraine. The boys were translating what their father was telling us about their home there and what they’d given up to come to America. To see this other side of the student who had had these behavior problems at school was amazing.

As we were leaving, the dad said something, and the boys translated it as, “Mr. Coons will be your dad at school.” From that moment, the behavior of these boys changed. When they got into trouble in other classrooms, I would say to other teachers, send them to my room. It was a way to keep them engaged, and it completely changed our relationship.

I have this and other experiences throughout my career that have taught me about the importance of meeting families. Not necessarily in school and not in a place where there is a power differential, but with families where they are. So when I heard about Parent Teacher Home Visits, it was an automatic yes. You see the importance of coming in and visiting with the adults in the students’ lives and finding out what their hopes and dreams are. And most importantly, not coming in with an agenda. It’s transformative for everyone, especially in the lives of educators. It challenges the stereotypes and helps them to see the whole kid and the whole family.

Scaling Home Visits

One of the ways we are committed to scaling Parent Teacher Home Visits is through our work at the NEA. For example, NEA has a commitment to community schools, and one of our organizational priorities is to help scale the six pillars of community schools, that is, through improving culturally competent curriculum, high-quality teaching and learning, inclusive leadership, positive behavior practices, coordinated and integrated wraparound services, and family–community partnerships. We’re thinking about how to get these out into the system. Parent Teacher Home Visits is a strategy that NEA can partner with to develop those partnerships that see families as assets and partners in the work. And we can use those partnerships to raise greater awareness about home visits.

I’m also encouraged by how PTHV has been thinking outside the box, especially in response to the pandemic.

Not everybody can offer a physical home visit, and so creating the virtual engagement that mirrors the in-person engagement and engage families in new ways, I think is a real growth area for PTHV.

The Next 25 Years

Twenty-five years from now, I expect to see Parent Teacher Home Visits recognized for its expertise on best practices for engaging and connecting educators with students, homes, and families. I hope that the organization will continue to think of new and groundbreaking ways to connect with families. They’ve started down that path.

I also hope every college of education teaches prospective educators the importance of connecting with the families and communities of their students and that Parent Teacher Home Visits is on the shortlist of strategies for how to do that. This is a really hard profession. There are not enough hours in the day to have a truly student-centered learning environment. I worry that for a lot of educators, the realities of the job keep them from being as engaged as they wish they could be. Parent Teacher Home Visits is a strategy in which you get to live your ambition, to make it a reality to really get to know your families and the communities you serve. It’s a way to bring your heart back into teaching. It’s a reminder of why you’re doing this hard work.

I think Parent Teacher Home Visits is also a great teacher retention strategy, especially for new teachers because I know it can be lonely when you first get into it. This is a way to rejuvenate yourself and be reminded of why you became a teacher in the first place.

Reminder

Find all the full-length “impact stories” on the PTHV Blog at https://pthvp.org/tag/impact-story/
When I first started home visits back in my second year of teaching, I was so shy back then and afraid because I didn’t know how to start conversations and would ask myself, how am I supposed to do this? But then I remembered the training gave us guidance on this. It was in 2012, and I went on my first visit to one of my student’s homes and was super nervous. Because my colleague already had one of the students’ brothers in her class, and she already knew the family, it helped a lot.

I remember going on a home visit, and the family’s house was so beautiful. I told the parents how much I loved their house, but they responded by saying they bet mine was even nicer. I politely told them that it wasn’t, that I lived in a one-bedroom apartment. I was surprised they genuinely thought teachers lived in mansions.

Another memorable visit was when I visited a couple of years ago with a mom who repeatedly declined home visits. One day, I helped her understand that I wasn’t coming to her house to see how her family was living. I made her feel safer by mentioning that my house was sometimes messy, too, as I didn’t have time to clean during the week. She agreed to a visit finally, and when I went, I understood why the student was missing school a lot and why the mom didn’t show up. I discovered that the dad had been deported, causing the mom to have to work every day. Her only time off was Sunday evening, when she had the time to clean, do the laundry, and go grocery shopping. That was a lot to handle.

One thing I love about home visits is that I get to know the parents and stop making assumptions about why a parent is not involved, why a student misses a lot, why the child sometimes behaves the way that they behave in class, or why I never see the parents, and why the parents don’t answer my calls.

During that visit, we had a good conversation, and I mentioned the names of people she knew but didn’t know lived close to her. I encouraged her to reach out to them so they could help each other. That was the year when more than 50% of my students had single mothers. I let her know they could partner up, for example, by taking turns bringing the kids to school and taking them home.

I also shared that she could have his older siblings sit with our student and go over some of his lessons. I gave her worksheets that she could use and taught her some strategies to use when teaching him, and she said she could go through them on Sundays while she did the laundry.

About five or six years ago, I started taking advantage of the second visits to offer all parents strategies to help their kids academically. I teach English Language Acquisition – Spanish, and I would notice on literacy nights many parents were too embarrassed to admit they didn’t know how to help their children. With home visits, you get one-on-one time, and they can open up. I would explain the concepts like teaching syllables and working with high-frequency words. We make so much more progress after that.

This year I’ve done two visits with all my families, and the results showed up immediately in our testing. On one of our annual tests, 15 of my students came out as advanced, meaning above grade level, scoring at levels I hadn’t seen before; I was so proud. Four were “green,” meaning their results were satisfactory. Three were yellow and two red.

I love doing home visits. I learn so much from parents, and parents start to feel so much more comfortable interacting with me and the school. They don’t see you as a teacher anymore. They start to see you more as a friend. I would love to see and share more stories of home visit successes because they are so encouraging. And I’d love to do three home visits each year: one right at the beginning of the year, a second visit in January or February at the halfway point or after assessments, and then one toward the end of the year to talk about what parents should do over the summer to ensure the kids stay on track and don’t fall behind.
first heard about Parent Teacher Home Visits about 13 years ago. I taught fourth-grade math at Stanton Elementary School in Washington, DC. I arrived at Stanton because Michelle Rhee, who was the chancellor at the time, came up with this idea where high-performing charter schools could partner with the lowest-performing elementary, middle, and high schools. Those schools would be granted the flexibility in the funding to turn around the school using a model that’s already proven to work for kids.

Stanton’s condition was dire. We were, at the time, 71st out of 72 schools—the second-lowest performing elementary school in the district in one of the poorest communities in the city. We had a reputation that students who had been expelled from other schools would find their way to Stanton. My cohort found its way to the school because of that agreement to take on this transformation work. Around that time, we had stumbled upon an article that said if you want to be a high-performing school, you need to make kids feel safe at school. You need a good curriculum. You need a way to retain good teachers. We realized that the one thing we were missing was good family engagement.

We had a great principal who constantly brought us back to the drawing board. We were continually pulling data, looking at models, and learning theory. Our days stretched until 6 pm most weeks. One day the principal gathered us in the library and introduced the idea of home visits, and she sweetened the pot—with money and food. We were a little weary from all the new initiatives, but I’ll never forget, she promised us this was going to be revolutionary. I was there in the back, joking with one of my colleagues, “What is it, magic fairy dust?”

Turns out, it was! Parent Teacher Home Visits is the magic fairy dust to have in your pocket and pour on people. It works, and you get so much back as an educator when you start a home visit practice. No kidding: it’s the fairy dust no one ever told you about.

When we did our first training, I had maybe eight or nine years of teaching experience. I’d long decided to teach at the places where I was most needed. I’d gone through a lot of professional development in those years. What moved me about training for PTHV was that even though I was well into the game, the one thing that was different about professional development for PTHV was that I’d never heard from a parent. Now I’ve been teaching for almost 20 years, and it’s still true. There’d never been a space where I was learning something from a parent.

Home visits were to start in the summer before the next school year. We’d walk into our students’ neighborhoods. Kids were riding their bikes, and when they saw us, they almost panicked. We had to assure them that no one was in trouble. That summer was eye-opening for me. We’d schedule three or four visits in a day. That had us out in the community, seeing things we hadn’t seen before. I wound up doing a lot of visits through word of mouth.

Initially a lot of parents rejected the idea. I happened to have tried to do home visits with two parents who were best friends. One had said yes, and the other not only told me no, but to never call her back asking again. Well, I had the visit with the one mom, and she called her best friend and told her what an amazing time she had. Word about home visits started spreading like wildfire. Parents would ask us when teachers from other grades would be coming. The whole community got behind home visits.

After that first year of home visits, anyone who walked into Stanton would say it felt like a different school. The kids were excited to be back in school. They had a new energy about them because they knew we knew their parents personally. Not just the parents. I also knew the Candy Lady and all these other people in their neighborhoods.

I’ve been reflecting on this a lot lately. There’s something to be said about how people show up once you see the humanity in everyone. There was this monumental shift in the air. Once parents understood we saw their humanity and that we were with them, things changed.
NATIONAL HOME VISIT NETWORK
July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

28 STATES+DC & SK
401 SITES
2,390 TRAINED
30,168 VISITS
I am a first-grade teacher at K.T. Murphy Elementary School in Stamford, CT. This is my fourth year teaching. I started Parent Teacher Home Visits last year when I was a fourth-grade teacher. I enjoyed it and saw great benefits from it. So I've continued on in my first-grade class now.

I started out as a distance learning teacher, and I saw an ad for a position at my current school that mentioned the visits. One of our goals at K.T. Murphy is parent-teacher engagement, and we were always looking to get families more involved in our school. It's something I'm passionate about because I love looking at the whole student. I see so many benefits—not just in academics—but social, including family. I figured it would be a great way to pilot these ideas about family engagement.

At that time, everything was online as we were piloting Parent Teacher Home Visits during the 2020-2021 school year, so it was a little bit less intimidating than other teachers who start with in-person visits. We didn't have the option to go into homes, so we instead did virtual visits over Zoom calls. I've now seen first-hand why it's so important to engage with families and how it promotes learning in the classroom. Students feel so seen, and the families are so much more comfortable when you take a little bit of time to hear them out and get to know them. I saw tremendous communication gaps shrink.

I did all in-person visits the next year. We still met families outside for comfort due to COVID. I quickly realized that although I had enjoyed online visits and saw tremendous benefits, with being in person, it is so much easier to relate and get along with people when you're right there next to them. I will say that we were able to see more family members when we did Parent Teacher Home Visits online, and we also saw more of their families. Everyone was home at that point, eating dinner or whatever they were doing. I saw Mom, Dad, brothers, and sisters. When we started the in-person phase of our pilot, I mainly saw one parent, and one or two students if they had another sibling at the school.

I know other teachers worry about what to say and what not to say on a home visit, but I felt equipped by the training we had with PTHV. When the visits were online, I could pull up some guiding questions on another screen. So I felt comfortable from the start because I knew how to facilitate the conversations. However, with being in person, I was definitely not looking at the paper. It was more fluid. You just talk and go where the conversation leads.

With many home visits under my belt now, I've noticed each family had their own interpretation of the question about their hopes and dreams. Some took it as far as, “I hope my child goes to college and pursues a specific career.” The kids’ dreams were also wide-ranging, like, “I hope I do better in soccer this year and score a goal,” or “I want to become a doctor.” It was so interesting to hear how the families interpreted the question. I also heard parents say their hope and dream for that school year was to improve on math and academics and different areas. But what I remember more is their excitement over being able to share what their experiences were and what they wanted for their children, in school and throughout life.

Stop, Pause, and Listen

I tend to compare Parent Teacher Home Visits to conferences. In conferences, it's more of the teacher talking and explaining things, and with home visits it's nice to be able to take the backseat and facilitate and hear from the parents rather than dominating the discussion. Parents want to share about their kids. It's really helpful when we stop, pause, and listen.

It's easy to assume that parents don't care because of their lack of response. However, what I found is, the more that you reach out, and the more that you show that you're interested and that you're open to hearing what they have to say, that's actually just not the case. There are so many different factors going into why school staff might be thinking that some parents don't care. I've had so many experiences where parents have had a sick child. Parents have been working day and night. Many have barriers of language and the barrier of not knowing the school system. So Parent Teacher Home Visits has been a wonderful learning experience.
I am a PE teacher, athletic director, and lead elective teacher — I have a lot of responsibilities in the building at Desert Skies Middle School. I now also hold the title of home visit coordinator.

I learned about Parent Teacher Home Visits about nine years ago when there was a bit of dialogue going around the district about it. People were talking about going into people’s homes. My first thought was, “What? In their homes? I don’t think so.” It sounded kinda scary to me. I went to a meeting and listened to what they had to say about home visits and what these visits could do. I was sold that night.

I got together with a couple of people at the school I used to work in, and we made some phone calls. We got some home visits scheduled, and we loved them. It was amazing. We still have wonderful memories of those first home visits. That was how it all got started. Who would have thought I would have won an award from PTHV for conducting home visits during the first national PTHV Week? Not me!

What stood out and still stands out were the stories I heard that night. As we listened to the stories, in one of them, we were challenged to figure out why this lady’s house looked so messy. At first, everybody was talking about the negative, but it turned out that it was nothing but a hard-working single mom who took care of her kids and had to make the choices that she thought were best.

This experience opened my eyes to the idea that I might have been looking at our kids the wrong way. I felt it like a dagger in my heart. I was judging a book by its cover. When we left. Grandpa said, “You know, there might be some bad things happening at the school, but I feel a lot better knowing that there are people like you at the school who care about my grandson.”

That was some impact we made with that one visit. We had another visit, and Grandma made us dinner. And Grandpa still buys me and the other teacher presents to this day, and his grandson has already graduated high school. He’s bought us necklaces and trinkets from cruises that he and his wife went on. One time he called us because his wife was rushed to the hospital. He needed someone to talk to, and he thought of us because of our relationship over the years.

We built a bridge between the families and ourselves. They have more understanding of who to call and what to do if they have concerns. The other thing that I see being a classroom teacher is respect from students. They showed us things they’ve probably never shown other teachers; they opened their homes and hearts to us. When the kids start to do something a little off-task, you give them the mom look, and they get it. It’s like an immediate respect thing.
Home Visits have been a game-changer for parent, student, and teacher collaboration and active participation in the overall performance and wellbeing of the student. I believe that one of the most important things we can do to support our students is to build strong relationships between families and schools. I have had the fortunate experience of inheriting such an incredible program from my predecessor, who was also active in home visits.

I have the beauty of running the Denver Public Schools, a massive organization of over 90,000 students and 14,000 employees. Often, I receive a lot of briefings which I pore over, and one day I received a special request, and my interest was piqued. I said, “Wait, what is this request?”

Asking this question propelled me to visit a home in one of our north high schools, a flagship high school, in the spring semester of last year. Since that opportunity, I have noticed in hindsight that the program is designed to support our vision for family and community engagement.

In fact, I am grateful to have been a participant because it could have been missed in my briefings. It’s easy for someone who is in charge of the strategic vision of a large organization to lose sight of every detail of what is happening, where it is happening, and the incredible work that is happening in such a large district.

Frankly, I didn’t understand what I was saying yes to when I was first invited to a home visit. However, I had gained a bit of experience on that front. I was a counselor and a baseball coach, so I developed a strong connection with my student-athletes. So, I was able to break down the wall of defense that was evident in some homes.

Usually, when you think of a home visit, it’s either a wellness check or targeted around a selected area. Surprisingly, Parent Teacher Home Visits was the opposite of that.

I was doing this with a pair of educators right in the family’s living room. It was basically a student-led conference at home with the parents as participants. I engaged in the process by commenting on a fireman’s helmet hanging on the wall. Excitedly, the dad began telling me about his firefighting career in Mexico and what he’s currently doing in the United States. In hindsight, I wonder how many lives we would’ve transformed if we had home visits when I was growing up in the Bronx, New York.

I believe in home visits so much that I’ve made them part of a strategic roadmap guiding our school district in Denver for the next four years. Parental engagement is terrific. Parental involvement is awesome. But when you combine that with parental empowerment – which Parent Teacher Home Visits does – the experience will be truly elevated.

PTHV takes care of engagement, involvement, and empowerment to strengthen their children’s educational journeys.

The impact of PTHV in Denver Public Schools (DPS) is a win for our scholars, our families, and our educators. That’s a win-win-win. PTHV provides our educators with meaningful engagements with the families – as teachers actually sit down to engage and connect with students and their families during these visits.

Our students are inspired and motivated to perform well in the classrooms because we’ve taken the classrooms to their living rooms or wherever we are connecting with them. Additionally, families are becoming invested because they can see how the teachers care about their kids’ academic performance and their wellbeing.

PTHV has empowered parents to become more active in schools and even as part of our staff. I can see that extending to our governing board and even our state board. Noticeably, PTHV allows our teachers to build bridges and opens up lines of communication with families.

I encourage district superintendents, deputy superintendents, chiefs, directors, and principals to engage in this initiative as a regular practice in their schools because it will go a long way toward strengthening the connections between parents, students, and teachers.
My first visit to the home of two of my students—sisters who were one year, less one day, apart in age—occurred early in my teaching days. It was a poignant and powerful experience for me, one that remains a watershed moment. I was invited to the girls’ birthday party. As a young and inexperienced teacher, still uncertain about professional boundaries, a key topic in my teacher education program, I was unsure of whether to accept the invitation. Because it seemed so important to the girls that I attend, I decided to go.

As I approached the family’s front door in their complex, a cat made its way out through a large hole in the window screen. The door flew open and the girls burst outside beaming, welcoming me in. As I entered their home, in that tiny entrance, I saw the broken closet door hanging off its hinges and the piles of items jammed in behind it—shoes, backpacks, newspapers, discarded toys. To my left, I saw that an ashtray had been knocked off the coffee table and left there. To my right, I entered the cramped kitchen where I was invited by the girls’ mom to sit down.

Across the table from me sat one other birthday guest, an elderly woman. The girls were so excited by their surprise! I quickly learned that no children were coming to the party. The party guests included only me and the children’s grandma—a woman who had ridden a bus across two provinces, through a day and a night, to be there for her granddaughters’ birthday party.

As the afternoon unfolded, we played board games together. We ate cake. They shared family stories, and so did I. I became part of the laughter and the teasing, part of the ties that bound us together in that special moment.

When I entered their home earlier in the day, I was taken aback by the signs of poverty and the poor living conditions. As the birthday party unfolded, I learned that this was not their whole story. When I left their home a couple of hours later, my heart was filled with the love I witnessed, the commitment to family, and the family’s commitment to their children. I was changed as a human being through that experience. I was changed as a teacher. It was like a mirror had been held up to my face.

I realized how many stereotypes, judgments, and assumptions I carried—and how naive they were.

I did not know the homes in which the children in my school neighborhood resided. I did not know their lives and stories. While I was privileged to have been invited to this birthday party, I realized it was not their job to invite me in, to teach me who they were; it was my job to learn about them. Walking back to school, I promised myself that I would spend time with every family, get to know the story they wanted to tell of themselves, and work with them out of the place of their story. I became a home visit convert that day, and I never looked back.

I believe passionately that one home visit can change your life. Over the many years of my career, and in various roles as consultant, principal, school division leader, or teacher educator, I promoted home visits. I shared my stories and used my experiences in mentoring others, and the questions came pouring in:

- What is a home visit?
- What do I do on a home visit?
- What if the family doesn’t want me to come to their home?
- What if it’s unsafe?

I realized I needed to further my learning about home visits. Captivated by the work of Parent Teacher Home Visits, I reached out to the national office to see if I could visit. In January 2018, I spent an amazing two days with this group of passionate and articulate leaders. Gina Martinez-Keddy, Yesenia Ramirez, Gretchen Viglione, and I talked for hours. I learned their story, became knowledgeable about PTHV home visit practices and non-negotiables, participated in a training, and visited a university site where they train preservice teachers. I grew so much from their teachings and left Sacramento, not just a convert to home visits but a convert to the PTHV home visits model.
I’ve always wanted to go back to my daughter’s second-grade teacher, Mrs. Pearson, and ask her what made her do home visits. I know why I said yes. I said yes because, as a parent and a woman, I was entering into a place in my life where I was standing in my truth, and it was messy! And I didn’t care. If I’d been asked a year earlier, I wouldn’t have wanted to do it. I probably would have said no.

And I would have missed out on the experiences that allowed me to blossom and really open up, and move into a different mindset to where I could really help my daughter achieve. So that’s why I said yes. First of all, it was free, and it was for my baby. I wanted anything that I could get to help her, and make her better.

I’m sure I was one of the “easy” families that educators would pick to start their home visits. I was always at the school. I was at Back to Science Night. I was there every Thursday. My daughter Aubrey would leave school and go to the rec center next door. Extended learning was also a place where she lived and thrived. She became part of who she is in that building. I looked at everyone there as family. I trusted everyone there with my daughter. I was born and raised in St. Paul, but I didn’t feel that connection when I was growing up.

I always wondered what would have happened without that visit. My daughter, of course, would have continued going to school, but now she had Mrs. Pearson who was rooting for her. It made such a difference. I remember one of the lessons Aubrey struggled with was inferences in reading. I remember all the calls I had with Mrs. Pearson after that first visit. She would tell me Aubrey was “right there, but she keeps getting just that one thing wrong.” But they were encouraging calls, not cold, and I learned what I could do to help. Without that visit, I might not have even have understood exactly the skill set my daughter was working on, but I did because Mrs. Pearson and I had developed a relationship to help Aubrey succeed.

Now I have all these new skills sets for interacting with the school system that I didn’t have before. And I pass that knowledge on to my sisters. I tell them, “Talk to this person.” “Go into the building and talk with that teacher.” “Write that email.” “Follow up.” I forced them out of their comfort zone. I told them it’s their right to build a relationship with the person who’s going to have the opportunity to build an 8+-hour relationship with your child. You deserve to have that relationship, too. That’s how you find that human connection.

Finding that connection blossomed into me rooting for all the kids in my daughter’s class. It all started with just a little bit of expansion with a home visit. Later, it was APTT, and then partnering on various initiatives within the school, and then leaning in and learning the politics behind education at the local, state, and national levels. I became a champion for public schools. As a black woman, my mother knew none of that. She didn’t have any of that knowledge. I don’t recall sitting in rooms with any of my girlfriends and hearing them talk about education like this. It’s not shared information, in our community, at least.

When the option for a home visit was presented to me, I said yes. And one yes leads to another yes. I didn’t know where all those yeses were going to lead me and my daughter, but I knew that doors were going to open. I knew behind those doors were experiences that were going to enrich my daughter’s life and my life. So I’m going to continue to say yes, as long as I can say yes.

### KIRINDA ANDERSON
Parent, Minnesota

I’m Going to Say Yes as Long as I Can Say Yes

There’s More to the Story!

Kirinda and others shared a lot more about why they said yes to home visits. Find the full-length version of their “impact stories” on the PTHV Blog at [https://pthvp.org/tag/impact-story/](https://pthvp.org/tag/impact-story/)
It was about 25 years ago when I read an article about a new home visit program that had started in Sacramento. It felt like a bell went off in my head. At the time, I had many questions like, where do you start, and what do you do if you haven't done anything related to family engagement beyond the usual, low-impact stuff like parent-teacher conferences? I fretted about it for so long. I'd been thinking about things like a community walk, but when I read about Parent Teacher Home Visits, I thought: perfect. I need to find out more.

One thing led to another, and I got hooked up with Carrie Rose (former executive director of Parent Teacher Home Visits). She asked me if I would come and speak at a conference she was having in Sacramento. I said yes, but with a condition. The condition was that I wanted to go on a home visit because I'd never been on one, especially one like theirs. She obliged. Karen Mapp came with me on that trip.

Thankfully, I got to go on three home visits, which were wonderful experiences for me to be with veteran teachers who had been doing home visits for a while. I was able to see not only how a parent might experience a home visit but also how the teachers were experiencing it. They told me all sorts of things. Many teachers told me that they had been so discouraged that they were going to leave teaching. They didn't know how to connect with families, and they didn't feel they were getting support from anywhere. Then, they learned how to do home visits, and it changed everything.

Building the evidence base for the effects of families on academic achievement has been my life's work. Back in the 1980s, when Ronald Reagan was president, I was working for the National Committee for Citizens in Education. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act and all its parent involvement requirements were wiped out on the grounds that they undermined the authority of local officials. We reasoned with many people on Capitol Hill and in the administration, who were convinced there was no evidence that involving parents had anything to do with student achievement. Well, I knew there was research from my work on the War on Poverty. I wrote the first research review on parent involvement and student achievement, *The Evidence Grows*. Next was *Beyond the Bake Sale*, which I later updated with Karen Mapp. This was a turning point because this was available on the internet and was backed by a federally funded agency. This got the word out there about the evidence for family engagement. And just recently, we published *Everyone Wins!* The Evidence for Family-School Partnerships & Implications for Practice. This is the fifth book in our evidence series and the first one to include Parent Teacher Home Visits because PTHV now has three evaluation studies.

What we were trying to achieve in the latest book was to collect evidence for not just how students do better, but also highlight the research on its effects on teachers, families, schools, and communities. From our experiences with home visits, we knew it changed the way teachers saw families. We knew that home visits made teachers more likely to stay in the profession. We knew teachers reported feeling more supported when they had home visit practices. They were getting valuable information from parents that they could use to motivate kids in class. Home visits help them become more effective teachers in that way.

Then we started to see the schoolwide and community impacts. We saw that communities got healthier when parents and schools were working together, and parents were able to find their voices and get support from schools. Parents were becoming leaders and organizing other parents. This engagement created a healthier civic culture. There were so many benefits; that's how we got the title because it's true: everyone wins.
In 1998, I returned to Denver after completing my master’s program in Detroit and having taught for two years in Detroit Public Schools. I was hired at a highly impacted school, in the most impacted neighborhood, in the state of Colorado. The term “highly impacted school” refers to those with multiple risk factors that jeopardize student success, including high student mobility, high concentrations of community poverty, and high numbers of students who are learning English.

Fairview Elementary was highly impacted in every sense of the word. I would use the word “struggle” to describe my first two years there. I was in the third wave of new employees at the school. There were three years of near-100 percent turnover. Everyone was gone from year one. Year two: same thing. I was in that group of new hires—all new teachers in the school, all new administrators, all new employees, and all new curriculum. People would say candidly that the neighborhood had been in a precarious position for years. The community didn’t trust anyone or anything.

In 2000 we got a new principal, but we were still struggling. There was still no relationship between the community and the school. The new principal’s husband worked for a faith-based organization that was connected to the community organization that worked with Yesenia Ramirez and Jocelyn Graves to found Parent Teacher Home Visits in Sacramento. By that point, PTHV had launched its first pilot of eight schools. Through our connections, we got Yesenia and Jocelyn to come to our school, and together with the Colorado group, did a training for our little school that was struggling so much to begin to build a bridge to the community. We had a small staff—20 people all told, and somewhere near 400 kids. I remember the day fondly that they trained us in this thing called Parent Teacher Home Visits. We were sitting in the auditorium. We had flip charts and so much paper—the old school stuff with markers and stickies. We all sat listening and we would write things down on charts and tape them up on the wall and have these incredibly deep conversations about how can we find out what the community wants, what parents need, how to get families engaged, and how all of this would even work after so much damage had been done over the years.

And how we could create trust where none existed.

That’s how it got started. That’s how PTHV became a national organization: two communities experiencing similar issues and reaching out to learn from and help one another. The Colorado Education Association supported us with a grant to pay teachers to conduct home visits that first year. Yesenia left an old folder full of Xerox copies of guidance documents for us to follow. She also left an old VHS tape that had the original advertising video that they created. They had shown it to us during the training, and everyone had remarked about how powerful it was.
We began home visits in earnest, and everyone loved them. But my cohort of teachers didn't last very long, just as the waves before us. Instead of complete turnover, it was only about half this time. By the second year, we all wanted to resurrect the home visit training to get new staff on board. During a staff meeting, I whipped out that old VHS, the flip charts, and stickies and reviewed our training. Our home visit practice was revived for a second year.

Then the money ran out.

I, along with one other teacher, and the principal were willing to continue home visits without getting paid. And so we did it on our own. And we did home visits at the beginning of the year for about seven years. At subsequent staff meetings, I showed that video to staff while we continued our efforts to find new funding. I reached out to the national office and spoke with PTHV’s former Executive Director Carrie Rose to ask if she could help us in our quest. She invited us to PTHV’s national convening in Washington, DC, where home visit practitioners met. Not only did that gathering give us a networking opportunity, but we got plugged into a learning community that helped us to revitalize our practice. We did another formal training because by then, our staff had stabilized. Our home visit practice took off. Everyone in the building was trained, and parents loved it. It changed things—immediately.

Over time, we became known for our home visit practice. A new superintendent (Tom Boasberg) came to Denver Public Schools. As he was onboarding, he was going to schools giving presentations, doing media interviews, and conducting listening sessions with hundreds of teachers at a time. I wanted to impress upon him how successful our home visit practice was and get him to commit to expanding it to other schools. I used the same tactics that the grassroots faith-based organization taught us when we were getting started: Challenge your officials. Ask a question and frame it so they can't get out of it. Make them make a promise. And so that was what I did. I went to the microphone and asked, “Would you be willing to go on a Parent Teacher Home Visit with me to visit one of our Fairview families here in this neighborhood sometime in the next three months?” And he could not say no because the press was there. He replied, “Talk to my people. We’ll get this arranged.” I did.

Tom eventually became a champion of Parent Teacher Home Visits. He used to tell the story jokingly, saying that I’d really irritated him when I asked that question in front of everyone. He was so busy and was just starting out, but it turned out to be a very good thing. And he followed through, and we went on a visit with Nathaniel’s family, who lived a short walk from the school. The local news came along, too.

We sat on Nathaniel’s family sofa with the kids running around crazy. It was as noisy as could be. The TVs were on. The stereo was on. It was total chaos, and it was perfect.

The superintendent asked the family, “What are your hopes and dreams?” Nathaniel wanted to be a basketball player. And Tom said, “You know what, I’m a basketball player.” Tom had actually very recently had surgery on his knee, and he had a brace on his leg. He told Nathaniel that his injury came from basketball, that he’d played basketball in college. At that moment, it was no longer the superintendent of Denver Public Schools and the news team there anymore. It was just Tom sitting there on the sofa with me talking to Nathaniel and his mom about basketball. It was really awesome.

After we finished that visit, we walked back to school and Tom asked me how much does a home visit practice cost. I said, we’ve been working with hardly anything for years now. We had about $5,000 the last couple of years to pay everybody. We paid teachers $20 for each visit. He was shocked at how little it cost. He understood at that moment that we could replicate our home visit practice to more schools. He promised to get funding, and he did.
Home visits came into my life at a very trying time. I was fighting for custody of my sister’s children. I was fighting to keep them together. I was fighting to get on a lease to prevent them from being evicted. When the note came home in my niece Mikelle’s backpack, I thought it was just another fight about to happen.

Mikelle came to me in her first-grade year after her mom, my sister, was tragically killed along with my nephew. She initially went to stay with my mom, but then my mom passed away around Thanksgiving time before I stepped up to take care of my sister’s children. The complex where she was living wanted to put the kids out in 17 days. In that time, this note about home visits came in, so I was very apprehensive. Overnight I had gone from being a mom of two to a party of seven. I dropped everything and moved my kids to Southeast DC immediately, and I was in the middle of so much turmoil. The last thing I wanted was this home visit.

I talked to some of the other parents in the neighborhood to learn more about what was going on. I asked them if this was a serious matter that I needed to worry about. I asked them if I should agree to it or not. One of my neighbors assured me that it was okay. I eventually pushed my pride to the side. I said to myself, “This is not for me. This is for my niece.” So I agreed to do it. I was still nervous. I did extra cleaning the night before and had the kids clean up too.

It was nothing like what I expected. It wasn’t like the teachers were coming to check on me and look at my home, which is what I thought it was. I thought they were going to come in and find something to take my niece and other kids away. In my time in school, teachers would come because you were in trouble or because you were absent from school. There was some kind of bad report. It was not positive at all.

That first home visit over the summer turned out to be a great opportunity for me and the rest of the kids in the household. The teachers and I became friends.

They asked me what my hopes and dreams were for my niece. At first, I stumbled on the question. No one has ever asked me that question about my kids. I wasn’t sure how to answer. I really was just trying to hold things together for the kids. We were in survival mode. I said I just wanted my niece to have a great school year, but as I relaxed and thought about it, knowing my niece, I told them she deserved to be on stage somewhere in the future, down the line, go off to college and all that.

Finally, I got comfortable and invited them to see Mikelle’s room. They asked all kinds of questions about things Mikelle liked. They said it was so that they could have a book or something there on the first day of school to get the year started off right. The teachers sent home a postcard after that visit. Mikelle was so excited to get something in the mail. We kept that postcard on the fridge for years. She became so much more excited to go to school after that home visit. She became an honor roll student. And because she started taking school seriously, her siblings did too. Every year, we looked forward to a home visit, and we would ask if we didn’t hear about them right away.

That home visit changed me too. I found myself at the school more often. I would stay throughout the day to help teachers out. Before that home visit, I don’t think I fully understood teachers. I thought they taught the kids and sent them home, and that was it. I wound up helping out in the school office a lot. I learned just how much teachers went through. I found out teachers don’t have enough time to teach. I found out that parents need to be a little patient with teachers. And I learned that hopes and dreams are important for parents to think about.
I started teaching in the Sacramento City Unified School District in 1998. I had been teaching for almost 10 years when Parent Teacher Home Visits came to our school through another teacher who had come from a different district.

At that time, I was pretty much done with teaching. I was planning to finish out the year. I'd already started looking for other jobs: I'd interviewed and had an offer with a bank. So teaching wasn't what I thought I was going to be doing. There was so much emphasis on testing and test scores and reading and math. You couldn't teach other subjects, and this was first grade. I had burned out.

PTHV representatives came to our school to do a training. I remember thinking to myself, "These people are so nice. They're so positive." The training was great. But because I planned to move on, I didn't think I was going to do anything with it.

Later, a third-grade teacher needed a partner one day, and she asked me to go on a home visit with her. I still loved the kids. I loved my fellow teachers. I loved the families, I loved the community. I loved all that about teaching. It was all the other stuff that teaching had become under No Child Left Behind that became very intense.

I agreed and went on the visit with her. I remember meeting the little girl from her class, and her big brother was there. He was translating for us. I kept looking at him, and he kept looking at me. We both knew we'd seen each other before but couldn't quite place it. All of a sudden, we both realized who each other was. He says, "Miss Berretta?" And I said, "Manuel?" We stood up, and we gave each other a hug. What a moment that was.

Manuel had been in my very first kindergarten class. His mother had passed away, unfortunately, and his father had remarried and had his two little sisters, and so I had, of course, lost touch with Manuel. He was in high school at this time. He had already been admitted into Sac State. When he was in my kindergarten class, he was just this cute little butterball, and he wouldn't get off his dad's leg. His parents owned a taqueria, and his dad would bring me food every couple of days because my daughter and I had just moved to Sacramento from Portland. The family was so welcoming to me. We didn't really know many people in the area.

To see Manuel again after all this time and know that he was successful, was incredible. The family invited us to dinner, of course, and Manuel started talking about all these things that he remembered from kindergarten. It touched me so much because during that time of teaching, only the scores that your students had mattered. You were evaluated almost exclusively on their scores. So to have him say all these things that really mattered to him almost 10 years later—I can't even describe what it was like.

I had an epiphany. He reminded me this is why I became a teacher, and the things I did mattered and they made a difference for him. Now, he's successful and going to college. That visit was amazing, and life-changing.

I started doing home visits myself. Not every visit is as over-the-top or remarkable in the way that one was, but every visit touches you. I started developing different types of relationships with families and suddenly understanding stuff that I had never understood before about families. Different things than what we were told in staff meetings or in our staff rooms. For example, I understood how much families appreciated teachers, and how many of them viewed teachers as their child's hope. I taught in Title I exclusively. Our families had financial struggles, but they appreciated me so much they would often give me gifts. I was so humbled by this real love that the families have for us. All the other stuff kinda didn't matter anymore. Teachers matter to the most important people, the families.
Our trainings are interactive, dynamic, and essential to the practice of home visits. Led by an experienced team of both parents and educators, we conduct four types of custom training programs to introduce and deepen school staff's knowledge of the principles and practices of Parent Teacher Home Visits.

Impact Dashboard

We proudly present cumulative data on the impact of Parent Teacher Home Visits since our founding and since we’ve been systematically collecting and analyzing the results of PTHV practices nationwide. This information serves as a testament to the dedication and commitment of our educators, families, and communities in fostering strong relationships and enhancing student success through home visits. Our goal remains a Parent Teacher Home Visit for every learner.
In addition to our training services, we offer a library of 51 free tools and resources to support the home visit practice. It contains advocacy and communications tools, contract language and research guides, and more. Visit https://pthvp.org/toolbox/

Today, Parent Teacher Home Visits is practiced in 28 states across the United States, plus the District of Columbia, and the Canadian province of Saskatchewan.

In addition to training, Parent Teacher Home Visits provides a suite of implementation support services, including leadership onboarding, home visit practice coaching, technical assistance, and annual home visit debrief sessions.

The Parent Teacher Home Visits model was co-created by parents and educators using the community organizing principles of shared leadership and recognizing the inherent dignity in all people. The success of PTHV relies on training teachers and staff to develop meaningful relationships with families of their students, starting with voluntary home visits. These are short, 30- to 40-minute conversations, in which educators listen, ask questions, and make observations that they can take back to their classrooms to improve instruction for the learner. As a two-visit model, PTHV encourages the initial, ice-breaking visit to occur in the summer or early fall. This first visit focuses on sharing hopes and dreams. It is followed by ongoing communication throughout the year and a second visit that focuses on academics or any other relevant issue to the student or family.

335,609 TOTAL HOME VISITS

In addition to training, Parent Teacher Home Visits provides a suite of implementation support services, including leadership onboarding, home visit practice coaching, technical assistance, and annual home visit debrief sessions.

Today, Parent Teacher Home Visits is practiced in 28 states across the United States, plus the District of Columbia, and the Canadian province of Saskatchewan.

In addition to training, Parent Teacher Home Visits provides a suite of implementation support services, including leadership onboarding, home visit practice coaching, technical assistance, and annual home visit debrief sessions.

The Parent Teacher Home Visits model was co-created by parents and educators using the community organizing principles of shared leadership and recognizing the inherent dignity in all people. The success of PTHV relies on training teachers and staff to develop meaningful relationships with families of their students, starting with voluntary home visits. These are short, 30- to 40-minute conversations, in which educators listen, ask questions, and make observations that they can take back to their classrooms to improve instruction for the learner. As a two-visit model, PTHV encourages the initial, ice-breaking visit to occur in the summer or early fall. This first visit focuses on sharing hopes and dreams. It is followed by ongoing communication throughout the year and a second visit that focuses on academics or any other relevant issue to the student or family.

335,609 TOTAL HOME VISITS
W e’ve been connected with PTHV since around 2010. My role at that time was a teacher at a community school on the east side of St. Paul. I was also beginning to be a leader at the St. Paul Federation of Educators. I was on the executive board at the time. I’d been sent, through Saint Paul Public Schools, to a leadership development conference in Toledo, Ohio, for a week-long training offered by a chapter of the same community-organizing group that helped found the national Parent Teacher Home Visit Project.

I went out there, and I was kind of bragging to one of the other chapter leaders there about all the things we were doing with parents and community as a union and all the things that we were doing differently. A staff member from Sacramento ACT says, “Well, do you do home visits because that’s what we do.” I was intrigued and asked him to say more.

There’s nothing in my 20-and-some years of teaching at that time that struck me as such a win-win for kids, for the union, and for the district. I knew I wanted to try to start a home visit practice in St. Paul. When I came back, I didn’t go to our union right away with it, but I went to our assistant superintendent who was in charge of the community schools. I said, “This really seems like a great thing to do.” Of course, I got the typical reply: There’s no money for that.

Then I scheduled a time with our district person who was in charge of parent involvement. She explained that the district was going down this path of parent academies and other initiatives and again, there’s no money for that. I thought at the very least, I’d really like to get some folks in our school building trained. It was at this point that I went to our union and talked to our union president. She had some money left over to pull folks out for a training.

We just did five or six home visits each that year. For my first few visits I went on, not as the lead, but the paired educator. I was a science specialist at the time so I saw all students. One of my first few home visits was with a student who had two moms. They were struggling with how they were being perceived as women of color and as two moms. This would be formative to my work later on in promoting home visits within the district and ensuring that our home visitors could learn how to empathize on the spot and have experiences that they could share on the spot to ensure the visits were successful.

However, we got trained in November and then well, you know, Minnesota winter hits, and everything gets complicated outside the school building. But even with just a few visits, we really felt like they had a huge impact on us as educators and really wanted to spread the word about that. We talked about our experiences with leadership at our union. The buy-in was quick. They said that if the district isn’t willing to do this, let’s put it on the bargaining table. Contract negotiations were coming up. That was the same year also that we opened bargaining to not only all of our members, but to the community as well.

We went into open bargaining, and our members came to the table to testify about what a difference home visits made. We had some parents speak to their beliefs that home visits were a good idea. That’s how we won contract language around that. In the excitement of getting the win on contract language, we were faced with getting the practice rolling. I knew we were going to need more capacity because the district was still resistant. I pulled together some other teachers, and eventually a parent, to pull together a whole “train the trainer” team. I again spoke to our union president about our capacity needs to run Parent Teacher Home Visits. We found some funds to release me from the classroom to develop my ideas around parent engagement more. This is how, within a few years, we went from having about 15 visits to a few thousand visits across the district, and visits in more than 40 of our schools.

There’s No Money for That
Leadership is a team sport. We have a wonderful team in Washoe County, and I am one of the newest players. I've been here 10 months, and Parent Teacher Home Visits have been a central part of the district's work for many years. Although I've always engaged with families as a superintendent and on committees, but boy, was I missing out on the power of the home visit. It just hits differently than an advisory meeting, a focus group, or even a one-on-one meeting in your office. It's a very transformative experience.

It's invaluable for me to meet with our families—in their home, on their turf, in a place where they feel confident and comfortable. There's also power in humanizing ourselves as leaders. In this highly political, post-COVID era, superintendents, in particular, have been demonized and dehumanized. For me to go out and genuinely and casually engage with a family on their terms and listen to their experiences and their hopes and dreams—makes a difference in how they see the district and how they see me as a leader. Hopefully, they see me as someone who is approachable, who is on their team, who will advocate for them, and who will respond to them. I want them to know they can reach out to me if they need something. At the end of the day, leadership is founded on relationships, and that's exactly what PTHV does.

All my home visits have been memorable in the sense that I come away having learned so many things, with admiration for our staff, and respect and appreciation for our families and love for our students. One that stands out was in the fall. We went to the home of one of our students whose mother had gone through the district, and the grandmother worked in the district in Nutrition Services. She made a spread of homemade lumpia. The student gave us a tour of her bedroom, and I remember there was such a sense of family. One of the lessons I had from that, especially as a new superintendent—new to the community—was how deep the roots some of our families have within our district.

In my former district, rather than a mission or vision, we developed a promise that we will likely adopt as our promise here in the Washoe County School District. And that promise is to know every student by name, strength, and need so they graduate prepared for the future they choose. What better way to get to know a child or young person by name, strength, and need than by going into their home, meeting their family, and learning where they come from, who they are, what their culture is, and what their dreams are?

I see firsthand the benefits when I watch and listen to staff interact with students and families and create long-term relationships, which often later lead to opportunities for the students. I know there's national-level and district-level data that show why this matters in terms of educational outcomes and things like graduation rates. But what I would offer coming out of the pandemic is that relationships matter more than ever. Face-to-face, human-to-human relationships—connection—are so incredibly important.

Some of our students and families, just like all of us, have challenges in life, and some have more challenges than others. It's important to understand the realities that our students are living and that they bring with them when they come into our classrooms. I will say from experience that many of the behavioral issues—not all—stem from a lack of relationship between students and adults in the classroom or in the building. So the more we can build these relationships by bridging home and school, I believe the less we're going to see students act out. That's because at the end of the day, even if that teenager who is sitting on that couch during that home visit makes a bad choice at school and gets into trouble, that adult who has a relationship with her is going to be able to get through to her in a way that they otherwise wouldn't be able to.

Leadership Is Founded on Relationships

DR. SUSAN ENFIELD
Superintendent, Washoe County School District
I got introduced to Parent Teacher Home Visits when I was a student at Sacramento State. I was a student teacher getting my credential, and I was placed at a school site in Sacramento City Unified School District. It was a dual-language program, and my host teacher invited me on a home visit.

That first time, I didn't really have any expectations. We walked to the home because it wasn't too far from the school. We went in, and as it turns out, it was a lovely experience. I remember thinking back at my experience in elementary school and how it would have been a great way for my teachers to connect with my family and myself.

After I received my credential and began my first year in teaching, I got laid off; it was a time when there were a lot of layoffs happening. Then I got a job at Sacramento City Unified School District in a dual-language class setting. It was the same as my experience with the first home visit. Once I got used to everything as a new teacher there, I finally pulled this awesome strategy out of my pocket and thought, okay, I'm ready; I need to start doing home visits. From the first home visit that I did, I could not stop because I could not see myself starting the school year any other way than by getting to know my families and students, even before the school year would begin.

The first home visit that I went on through Sac City proved home visits impacted everyone. I had a student in kindergarten. Her name was Crystal, and every day got more difficult for her to come into the classroom. She would cry so much. Her sister would bring her in, and she'd have to stay to console her. I would tell the sister to leave Crystal so she could go. But it got worse and worse to the point where I had to go out to the front of the school to get her.

I was a crier when I started kindergarten, so I knew and understood what Crystal was feeling. That was when I knew this was where I needed to begin my home visits—with Crystal. So I talked to her mom. I said, “Hey, let's try this. It might open her up. I want to make a connection with her. That could be what's missing here.”

So we scheduled the visit, and I showed up. It was Mom and Crystal. And then I heard barking, and I asked Crystal, “Oh, is that your dog?” And she said, “Yes, it's Ruffles, my dog.” I asked to see the dog, so she brought Ruffles in. She told me about Ruffles and how she would take care of him and feed him. After that, any chance I got back into the classroom, I would bring up Ruffles. I would read a story, for example, and there'd be a dog in the story. And I'd say, “Oh Crystal, it's just like your dog Ruffles!” Crystal and I would have a special moment in class with other students, but it was just the two of us knowing what I was talking about.

And she stopped crying.

Taking 30 minutes out of your day to visit a family and learn from the family and the student is the best professional learning you will ever receive. I was that teacher who spent many summers and evenings attending workshops and training on curriculum, strategies, and anything that would help me. And yeah, I picked up one or two strategies, made connections, and met people. But when I started doing Parent Teacher Home Visits and getting to know families and having families get to know me was what made me a better teacher for my students.

I am so proud to be connected to Parent Teacher Home Visits. My hope and dream are that we continue spreading the joy and the love of what a true home visit is all about. And that we can reach out to more districts, not just here in the United States but across countries, because building a relationship anywhere is building a relationship. It works everywhere. I also hope to continue my relationship with PTHV because, honestly, that has kept me going; the support and collaboration have made me a better teacher.

More at https://pthvp.org/tag/impact-story/
This is my 26th year in education. About six years ago, I was a teacher and dean at a Washoe County School District alternative school, working with students and families who often had a history of negative interactions and experiences with the education system.

A colleague told me about a Parent Teacher Home Visits training, and I decided to attend. That one time, I immediately felt like I really liked the idea and I could give it a try.

I recruited my buddy to join me. We did 42 visits that year. We did every single one together. It was just us; nobody else at the school was doing them at the time. We hit the ground like jet fire. We would do two or three in a day. We were single then, but I would plot them out so we would go into neighborhoods in North Reno and then to South. But that’s how I was introduced to PTHV, and once we started it, we fell in love with it that first year.

It's hard to know where to start when it comes to sharing my memories of home visits. I have so much to share. They are all so interesting and unique and fun and loving. One that comes to mind is a time when our PTHV coordinator asked if I'd be interested in going on a visit with an administrator, someone who wasn't in the schools daily, so they could get to know what they were all about. Turns out it was with our new superintendent (Kristen McNeill).

We were going to see a high school sophomore and his mom, and the mom worked for the district in the food services department. So we had the superintendent, myself, and another teacher. It was in a tough part of town, not for me but for many. We drove up there, and we had the best visit. It went probably an hour and 15 minutes because it felt like a family dinner. We didn't eat anything, but it was so much conversation. It wasn't awkward with everyone's hands folded. But like at a family dinner, there were three conversations going on at each moment because everybody was interested in each person.

Our superintendent immediately understood what we were trying to accomplish with Parent Teacher Home Visits and the results we were seeking. I asked the student about his hopes and dreams, and the other teacher shared hopes and dreams for the student. And then, the superintendent turns to the mom and asks, “What are your hopes and dreams for your child?” It brought tears to her eyes. The mom hesitated at first and then opened up about wanting her child to go to college, maybe a two-year college, get a good job, and be successful.

It was such a special, full-circle moment for everyone in the room to be there talking about their hopes and dreams for that one student. He'd never experienced anything like that. That was a special one for me because I could see what a difference it was making.

I worked at a school, Washoe Inspire Academy, where not one of those children at our school wanted to be there. Not one of them chose to come to our school. They had to. There were behavioral issues; they'd done something they shouldn't have. We did Parent Teacher Home Visits like it was going out of style. I mean, everybody: probably 95 percent of our students that came through our doors there would have a visit. It was a big part of what we did.

We had two principals while I was there, and I stayed in touch with them. They would both say to me, “I don't know what you're doing but keep going because these home visits are spoken about at other meetings.” We'd become known for this.

I've been a teacher, a dean, a mentor, a coach, a brother, a son, all those things. I've become really good at observing and taking note of people's thoughts and feelings. The first Aha moment with home visits came right at the beginning when I first started them. I saw our students place more value in school. They cared more. There was less tagging and even less cursing in school. They knew we cared.
As a classroom teacher and a specialist in the late 90s and early 2000s, I did home visits (a different model). One of my principals moved me out of the classroom to do home visits for the schools. My counterpart was a white female, and we worked at a school that was predominantly minority. That was an interesting time to learn how people viewed home visits and what school staff thought of parents. I learned a lot from that experience that I took with me as I became a principal.

Then I went to Washoe County School District and met D’Lisa Crain—she’s amazing—and she was championing this work around Parent Teacher Home Visits. I was deputy superintendent at the time, and home visits took off but only partially. When I became superintendent, I believed it was important for our students, families, and communities to understand why we were doing home visits and their purpose. It was that bigger piece that was missing. Families needed to understand that home visits are about making deposits into families. They are not about the usual complaints, “Your student didn’t do this or that.” They are about hopes and dreams, getting to know one another, and building relationships with families.

At the time, we were leading the nation with our work around social-emotional learning, and we had a call to action around equity, but it was still a struggle to build a home visit practice in the district in those early days. Teachers were working a lot of hours, and there were so many pieces to our work. We had, however, a group of schools that believed in the work right from the start.

I did home visits as a superintendent, which was an eye-opener because it’s easy to make decisions for people below you as you move up the ranks. I believe you have got to lead by example, and it was important for me to partner with teachers and go on home visits.

I remember this distinctly when I went on the first Parent Teacher Home Visit with a family and two teachers.

Remember, we had this work around equity happening in the school. As a district, our staff was unwrapping standards, working on cultural proficiency, learning about culturally relevant materials, and uncovering biases—this is important. So I walked into the home. In my mind, I was guessing that this mom maybe had five baby daddies. I was judgmental before even getting to know her.

But then I checked myself. That’s what we have to do when we think about our work with students. I didn’t have issues around poverty or race but I was judging this personal matter—me the superintendent, the champion of equity. I stopped at that moment, and we talked about her kids. She had hopes and dreams for every one of them and individualized them. She loved her kids no less than my mom loved me. It reminded me that as we intertwine the pieces of the work we do, anybody, even with the best intentions, must remember that they go in with an unconscious bias. We have to ask ourselves constantly how does that impact how we serve our students. That day Parent Teacher Home Visits became that much more impactful to me.

I would see them in Walmart almost 10 years later, and I remembered that her oldest daughter wanted to be an NFL kicker. Another of her daughters wanted to be a designer; she had a lot of paper dolls. Her son was really into rockets. The thing is, the mom knew about what each of her kids wanted. She could produce artifacts on how she supported their individual hopes and dreams. How amazing is that! Had I stayed in my posture of judgment, I wouldn’t have had the ability to connect with her.

That sparked something for me. I started going to other...
home visits, and at the same time I was still leading the school district. We were on the road to raising graduation rates, and I was hearing and seeing all these stories of our kids and their resilience to overcome the obstacles. It was clear to me the difference home visits made. Some kids and families would get excited that the superintendent was at their house, but I always tried to make sure I did something extra after the visit, like go to one of their games or visit their classroom because the home-school connection was working.

My initial foray into home visits back in 1999 was almost accidental. At the time, I was the kind of teacher who was helping out with everything, like school plays. My principal came to me with the idea of being a home visiting teacher for Title I schools. To be honest, my first thought was, "Oh, I don't have to do lesson plans." But the trade-off was that I knew I would be going into homes where the people I worked with wouldn't enter. That's just the truth. My partner and I got to bring the community back into the school, though, and do things other teachers couldn't do.

Even before I started that first model of home visits, I learned a lesson from a retiring teacher that stuck with me and became foundational to my understanding of family engagement. I had a student, Ariana, who had tested my patience. I would get into these tiffs with her, and this teacher told me that I would be a great teacher one day, if only I would stop the power struggles. She told me I didn't have to always call home to report Ariana. She asked me when was the last time I called home to say Ariana did something right.

Oh now there was an idea! As a principal, I later implemented that principle. I would tell teachers not to bring a student with me unless they had a documented record of calling home at least three times to just connect with families and report something positive—this student got an A, or that student did something kind. If you haven't made a deposit, you cannot make a withdrawal. Parent Teacher Home Visits are such a great conduit of that. We are human beings and we are doing things to build relationships. The kids will never forget that. Even today, I have former students now in their 20s and 30s who find me on Facebook and tell me they remember the things I did.

And when parents know that you love their kids and they see what you're doing as organic and authentic, they are more willing to work with you and also to ask for help. We make assumptions that parents know everything sometimes, and Parent Teacher Home Visits allowed me to hear, in a safe way, what people were really thinking about the district when I began leading Washoe. Not that they are wrong or right, but what they were experiencing. So for example, 10 parents might have said to me that it was hard for them to understand something on a webpage. In this case, it was parents trying to get their kids into summer school. When I decided to put my own kid in summer school, I realized those parents weren't lying. It was hard. I knew I had to listen.

I also credit home visits with the academic gains I saw; for example, when I was principal at a large elementary school: 1,000 kids, only 20 percent of whom were proficient in reading and math. When I left it was 85 percent and a big part of it was our family engagement. It was pivotal to our becoming a "high-achieving elementary school." We had cultivated such deep relationships that I could easily reach out to my parents and they could reach out to me. We showed up for each other.

I have heard so many hopes and dreams and goals over the years. The ones that stick are the simplest things. It's easy for kids to say they want to be a doctor, lawyer, scientist, or computer programmer. But for me, it's so fulfilling when a kid identifies that they are the first generation, and they say, 'I want to be the first one to finish school with a diploma and hopefully go on to college.' What we take for granted on a daily basis is that everybody gets a high school diploma. There are still kids in this country who spend years in our school systems that do not walk away with a quality high school diploma. So for me, the best hope and dream is when they say I want to be the first in my family to do this. And I know they've got the determination, and the support of their families and the school, to make it happen.

My hope for Parent Teacher Home Visits is to continue to champion the work of building relationships because of their value to academic outcomes. There's enough research to show that when families are engaged, no matter who the family is, students do better. And home visits are one component of how we bring them in and how we get to know students deeply. That work is still as crucial as when PTHV started in its first year, and it will always be important. So keep on carrying the torch.
AMY SCHUTSKY
DC Public Schools

She’s a Friend Who Has My Back

Amy Schutsky experienced firsthand the remarkable impact of the Parent Teacher Home Visits initiative and how it helped build stronger bonds between teachers and families, improving student performance and creating an enabling environment for success in the classroom and beyond.

It started at Garrison Elementary, a DC public school. She was scheduled for an interview with Garrison, and of course, the first thing she did was Google the school. She read several disturbing headlines saying that Garrison was about to shut its doors because student enrollments were at an all-time low, and test scores were dishearteningly low. However, the parent-teacher organization was firmly against the decision and pushed for Garrison to remain open. It was evident to Amy that parents and teachers would play an active role in keeping Garrison Elementary open. The school had a deep commitment to family engagement, and “I knew that I wanted to be a part of it.”

That first year also came with a lot of responsibilities. “On top of everything that the principal said we were going to be doing, he also said we’re doing home visits. So you can imagine my stress level. Here I am, a new teacher coming into a new school. I’m new to the community, and now I also have to go visit all these families—in their homes.”

She persevered and visited about half of the families in her classroom, and says she saw an immediate impact. “And with my new, shiny bright second-year teacher attitude, I decided I was going to make sure that I met all of my families during the next school year.

That summer, she was at an event called Popsicles with the Principal, and a parent came sprinting toward her. She nearly panicked, but the parent smiled and gushed, “My son is going to be in third grade. I was wondering if he could be in your class. I heard you’re a great teacher, and I need him to be in your class.” And then the mom asked if Amy could do a home visit with her.

What a pleasant surprise that was, considering during that first school year, she had been reaching out to parents repeatedly and either not getting responses or being told no. Now here was a parent seeking her out and asking for a home visit.

“I went to the family’s home. We talked about football, and I met the entire family. There were seven kids, so I got to know all of them.”

When she asked the mom what her hopes and dreams were for the student, she said that her son was reading below grade level. And she wanted to make sure that that year, he ended reading above grade level.

“She said, ‘I do not know how to support him.’ So I knew we were going to have to work together to make sure that he was going to succeed academically, and that was going to be my goal for that family that year.”

And they did it. Together. “Through the work that I did with this parent all year that started with our one home visit, he ended the year reading above grade level, which was amazing.”

Amy jokes that she has attachment issues so she kept that same class the next school year. The student maintained his reading achievements, and then she began teaching his two younger sisters. The connection didn’t stop there. The mom became a parent support at the school, and she and Amy continue to text each other and check in from time to time. Three years after their first home visit, for example, the mom texted Amy asking to bring her laminator by so she could help Amy prepare her APTT activities.

“Not only was she helping the school out, she’s a friend,” Amy said. “She was someone I knew would always have my back.”

Seeing the impact she had with that family propelled Amy to want to extend her influence further and take her passion for family engagement to more people beyond her classroom. She began working on the family engagement leadership team at Garrison, supporting teachers with the implementation of home visits, ongoing communication, and academic partnering.
I learned of Parent Teacher Home Visits through a colleague of mine. It was 2014, and I was working as a social worker in a middle school up in Duluth, Minnesota. As a staff, we were working on ways to engage our families in our community. We had an approximately 10-12 percent attendance rate at parent-teacher conferences. There was not a whole lot of family engagement. When kids would get in trouble or get suspended or have academic difficulties, we found it challenging getting parents to come up.

We were sitting around brainstorming. This coworker, Katie Oliver, presented me with this article that Nick Faber wrote about how they do home visits and how effective it has been in St. Paul. We read the article, and said that's exactly what we want to start doing. We shared it with every one of our staff and said if anyone's interested let's sit down and figure out how we can make this happen. Katie and I got a very significant grant from the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation to help address the opportunity gap between students, and with that grant, we contacted Parent Teacher Home Visits to get started. I've been hooked ever since.

It wasn't blind faith that sold me on home visits. I have been a social worker going on 30 years. I was a child protection investigator before, so I'm used to working with really difficult situations. In spite of the type of work I do, I always believed that if you could connect on a personal level, even with people that had been accused of committing horrendous acts, those are still people that you can build relationships with—to get the information you need to make the best decision possible for what to do in the future, but also to give them the help or consequences that they need. If you had a genuine connection with them, that made all the difference, even in that difficult of a field.

I carried that same approach when I came into the schools. In a lot of ways, I do school social work in a pretty unique way, which is to engage families in the community. When I went to work in the school district, I chose a school that was in a community where I had worked before, because I felt connected to that community. It was a low-income community with a lot of generational abuse concerns.

I felt that's where I can make the most impact as a social worker. So, on finding a program that connected teachers with families, it was an automatic yes. This is it. This is exactly what everyone should be doing because it is about basic human connection and relationships and putting a child's best interests first. I knew it would work. I never had a doubt.

I remember my first visit. I remember that first family being caught off guard and taken aback by the hopes and dreams question. They were surprised and not sure how to answer it. They seemed to even have a bit of skepticism about why we were asking. Once they understood that we were on the same plane and we wanted the exact same thing as they did, you could just see that whole power imbalance—perceived or real—balance out. I knew right then and there that every teacher in our school needed to do this, or at least make an attempt at it because it shifted the whole dynamic when it came to engaging families with education. I couldn't believe we hadn't done this before. It's hard to describe what happens in that moment when you see it work. It's something you have to experience. What a difference it made in families feeling they had more say or more power and that we were there to support them.

I've never believed in anything more than this. I've been around a long time. I've seen it all, and I know this is my legacy. I'm getting to the tail end of my career. If I can leave anything behind in this community, it's going to be this. I want people to talk about this. I want it embedded in our community and in our school. I'm going to do everything possible to make that happen.
On my very first day as superintendent at Sacramento City Unified School District in August 2009, I had been working on all those first-day-of-school things. The day had started at 5:30 in the morning. I raised the flag on the flagpole outside of the Serna Center. I was interviewed on television, and I had a full day that was fairly scripted and coordinated —visiting schools, the history museum, and so on.

At the end of the day, I find myself in one of our elementary schools, Earl Warren, learning about what, at the time, was called the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project. I was sitting in the library, and in the room were two representatives from the teachers union. There were a few teachers, the principal of the elementary school, and a few other individuals.

After an orientation, I had a chance to ask a few questions, but then I was out on a visit. My first visit was with Nancy Fong, who was a first-grade teacher. We visited the Castro family, who lived very close by. Now I will say that Earl Warren Elementary School was one of several that we had in Sacramento, where 100 percent of the students came from homes that lived in poverty. Earl Warren also became a Blue Ribbon School, nationally recognized for outstanding student achievement. The one thing all these schools had in common, besides a great principal, was that every one of the teachers did home visits.

So with that as a backdrop, let me tell you about my visit to the Castro family. They lived in a very needy neighborhood, and it was very hot in Sacramento. The curtains were closed, and the shades were drawn to keep the house cool. Mrs. Castro, a single mother of three children in a modest home, had put out a beautiful serving for us. I'll never forget the beautiful brass, and she had some fruit and some other things that she had brought out there to be welcoming.

We sat, and then Nancy started to ask some questions, including what were her hopes and dreams for her son Mohamed. What are the things that he's interested in? At some point during the conversation, Mrs. Castro said, “There's something I just want you to know. There are some mornings that Mohamed may be late to school. It isn't that he doesn't want to get to school on time, or that I don't want him to get to school on time, or that I don't care.” But she said, “I'm going through chemotherapy, and there are some mornings when it's hard for me to get up. Mohamed has to get up, and he helps his siblings to get ready.”

It was in that moment when everything just melted away. I had been thinking about the blame game that happens between parents and schools. Why don't you send your kids to school at their best? Why can't the school do this or that? I mean, it all melted away in that instant. I could feel all the empathy and the care and the love that was in that room at that moment. The bond between parent and teacher and child—I call it the iron triangle. There's a reason triangles are the strongest architectural shape, and I could see how it's forged in that moment just like that.

I thought, how powerful is this simple act of going into your students' home? Crossing the threshold into their domain, into their territory, when so much of education has always been about the child and family coming to our domain, crossing our threshold. When you change that dynamic and you get onto their terms, it is amazing. I'll never forget it. It's like it was yesterday. I saw how powerful this program was, and I could understand why a school like Earl Warren, whose teachers volunteered to do home visits for all their students, became a nationally honored Blue Ribbon School, and how easy it could be for other schools.

I knew this was a program that we had to illuminate for the rest of our school district to see. Parent Teacher Home
Visits was in maybe 20 of our Title I schools at the time. So I began to think about how we make it accessible and how to encourage all of our teachers to do home visits.

I went on my second home visit with Teresa Cummings, who was a math teacher and a math coach at Hiram Johnson High School. We visited the home of an incoming ninth-grader. What I remembered most about that visit, and about that afternoon, was the impression that Teresa Cummings made on me. And several months later, when I was looking for a chief of staff, I remember that home visit, and I remembered Teresa Cummings. I thought, how could it be any more powerful than to have as my chief of staff a teacher who was so active and involved in home visits?

That’s my little story about how it started. Every month after that, I went on a home visit, which doesn’t sound like a lot, but with a busy schedule, I committed to them, and I had some incredible visits.

I could feel all the empathy and the care and the love that was in that room at that moment. The bond between parent and teacher and child—I call it the iron triangle. There’s a reason triangles are the strongest architectural shape, and I could see how it’s forged in that moment just like that.

There’s another visit that comes to mind. I went with Mr. Peters. It was a second visit, and the mother insisted on serving us this wonderful home-cooked meal. She told us how the first time Mr. Peters had come to her for a visit, she was petrified. In fact, she would leave her child at the corner, and the child would walk the rest of the way to school. She wouldn’t even come to the door of the school to drop off her son. But after that first visit, she was encouraged enough to bring her child to the school door and then, over time, into the school. And at the time I met her, she was volunteering in the Pre-K program. It just goes to show you, again, how powerful this strategy is. It’s an integral part of educating and developing children. It can lead to building partnerships between families, schools, and children.

I reached out to Carrie Rose (former executive director of PTHV) and said we’re making this a priority. You get the teachers, and I’ll get the funding. What better way to get more teachers involved than to have other teachers share the program? When we launched an effort in the spring of 2010 to turn around some of our neediest, most challenging schools as part of the school transformation plan, we had a list of non-negotiables. And one of them was every teacher who’s going to be in this turnaround school is going to do home visits. So, it was a powerful strategy. Then we had a broader effort with teachers who sold the virtues of the program so that it wasn’t this best-kept secret.

I have many hopes for the future of Parent Teacher Home Visits. For selfish reasons, I want to bring it to New Rochelle, but I always hope that this practice results and stories like mine and in experiences that can be shared. I want PTHV to be part of the story of why a school is so successful like it was with Earl Warren. And home visits become something we could build on to systematically. Traditional parent-teacher conferences are like drive-bys, very transactional. They could be built off a strong foundational relationship through Parent Teacher Home Visits. Home visits empower our families and they become multipliers. It’s like a transformer. One plus one equals four. So those are the ways that I think we continue to show this as a foundational strategy around teaching and learning, improvement, building relationships and a sense of community, and creating a supportive, welcoming climate and school culture.

Deeper Impact

The stories presented here are vignettes of longer, fuller stories about the impact of Parent Teacher Home Visits. Head over to https://pthvp.org/tag/impact-story/ for a deeper dive. The full versions share home visit memories, an overview of the tangible benefits and outcomes of having a home visit practice, advice to teachers and leaders who are on the fence about home visits, and personal hopes and dreams for the future of PTHV.
I grew up in the barrio of Chino, California. The city was divided into two communities. To the south of Riverside Drive was poor Mexican and to the north was middle-class white. We struggled financially and socially, and my whole family placed a lot of value on public education and what it could do to help you move forward in life.

At the same time, there were numerous attempts to integrate the schools, and in second grade, I started getting bused across town to the white, middle-class school. I experienced a lot of racial trauma and bullying, but that school had better facilities, more experienced teachers, more programs, more recreation—more of everything. I suddenly found myself in a whole new world.

It’s impossible to say how my life would have unfolded if I had stayed in my neighborhood school, but I’m the youngest of six kids in my family. It was just the two youngest of us who were bused, and it was the same two of us who got a four-year degree after high school. I figured out pretty early in life that I wasn’t smarter or more deserving than my older siblings; I just had access to a different kind of education than they did.

That experience deepened my respect for the power of education. My call toward education would take unexpected turns, but I was drawn by the experience of knowing that there are so many brilliant children everywhere who simply don’t have the kind of education they need to express it. I felt compelled to try to do something about that.

A chance meeting in Oakland got me involved in community organizing. I had started my Ph.D. program in Social and Cultural Studies in Education at UC Berkeley, and I more deeply understood how our lived experiences were shaped by bigger systemic decisions. In this meeting, community members were trying to bring after-school programming to their middle schools. I intended to sit quietly in the back corner and listen, but I wound up on a bigger career trajectory than I ever imagined. And it led me to Sacramento, where a group of neighbors were coming together to make a difference on behalf of their children.

It was the very earliest of days of what would become the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project. I studied under Jim Keddy and started working with Sacramento ACT, the organizing entity that launched PTHV.

Teachers were just beginning to get trained on how to conduct home visits, which were based on the organizing principle of one-on-one meetings. When the superintendent of Sacramento schools went on home visits, I went along to some to translate. That was a very profound experience because for the first time, the superintendent—one of the most powerful people in the school district—was hearing directly from families who were struggling. He was face-to-face with families who didn’t make a lot of money. They could barely afford their rent. He was hearing from immigrant families who lived in fear of deportation every day.

But what he heard and what I heard was that every single family we visited wanted the best for their children. They hoped the schools would be the vehicle for that, just like my family did. But the reality was, the schools, in many ways, weren’t living up to that hope. I also saw those first home-
visiting educators have the courage to jump into something brand new in the district. They were so nervous and afraid, but each one came out of a visit saying how incredibly powerful and transformational the experience was.

For me, the start of PTHV was like magic. People you wouldn’t expect to even know each other came together and rolled up their sleeves, and they created something out of nothing. That “can do” energy draws me in closer every day, and even though PTHV hasn't always had an abundance of resources, we manage to attract the most wonderful people who work so hard to live out our mission.

Fundamentally, the added value that Parent Teacher Home Visits brings to the field has to do with changing people and their mindsets. It does something to people. It breaks down barriers. It increases connection between people. It increases people's confidence in reaching out to each other for help. We heard that over and over when the pandemic hit. So many educators told us that their home visits before the pandemic made such a huge difference when all of us suddenly had this crisis on our hands. We saw families were reaching out to educators, and educators were reaching out to families—because they cared about each other. That's it. That care leads to all kinds of other things.

Parent Teacher Home Visits also translates into changing school culture and climate. We don't talk about that very much; we tend to focus more on academic outcomes, which are super important. However, those academic outcomes happen because of that strong, connective tissue at the heart of the home visit. Education advocates talk a lot about reform and changing things in school, but we're not paying enough attention to the foundation of what it means for a school to be a community of people who care about each other. That is where PTHV's impact is most felt.

A long time ago, because of the stories people shared, we started to do some of the initial research that provides our evidence base. For example, we saw graduation rates start to increase at Luther Burbank High School after home visits began. The research then confirmed what we were hearing from families and teachers. And it’s always been that way. Home visits start, changes happen, and research confirms the connection. This model, which is grounded in building relationships of trust, is what makes the difference—in academic outcomes for children, in reducing chronic absence rates, in connecting educators to their sense of professional purpose, and in helping families feel more confident and connected to schools.

And there’s work to be done to systemize this practice. I'm always thinking about ways to connect this practice between two educators and a family to the larger systems they are a part of. That is the challenge: how to get at the root causes within these big systems, that for so long, have been entrenched in behaviors and practices and mindsets that don't always serve our most vulnerable children and families.

Being able to point to individual and broader outcomes where home visits are implemented systematically is key. Home visits make a difference at the whole school, not just for the individuals who had the home visit. Our work now is to develop ways to integrate this practice into some of the bigger strategies that schools have, as a way of attempting bolder, systemic change.

My hope and dream for the future of Parent Teacher Home Visits are that we never lose that sense of grassroots organizing, and wherever home visits are practiced, there is a strong connection to the community. At the same time, we want to continue our growth. Who would have thought this little nugget of a thing would become an international organization?

I always say I want every single student in this country, and now maybe the world, to receive a Parent Teacher Home Visit in every grade from PreK through 12th. The numbers aren't the whole story, though. It has to be a home visit that is practiced with fidelity to the PTHV model. We are making such great headway in providing the kind of support that enables schools and districts to practice this model to realize the highest impact for students, families, and teachers. The system of support we're building out is critical to the long-term success of this practice. I believe our work is fundamentally changing what schools mean to communities as much as it is changing the experience of teaching and learning.
National Staff

Gina Martinez-Keddy
Executive Director

Yesenia Ramirez
Co-Founder, Senior Advisor

Rachel Brice
Program Director

Lisseth Calderon
Administrative Assistant

Heather Kilgore
Program Manager

DeQuendre Neeley-Bertrand
Communications Director

Alison Paia
Office Manager

Learn More

- The PTHV Model  https://pthvp.org/pthv-model-2/
- Training  https://pthvp.org/training-and-services/
- Research  https://pthvp.org/pthv-model-2/research-evaluation/
- Tools & Resources  https://pthvp.org/toolbox/
Board of Directors

Lisa Levasseur  
President  
Executive Director of School Support, Elk Grove Unified School District, Sacramento, CA

Emily Goff  
Secretary  
Principal Consultant, The Goff Group, LLC

Andy Coons  
Treasurer  
Senior Director, Center for Great Public Schools, National Education Association

Samantha Cohen  
Executive Director, Doctoral Programs, American University School of Education

Dena Donaldson  
Assistant Director, Educational Issues, American Federation of Teachers

Yolie Flores  
President & CEO, Families in Schools

Jenna Porter  
Chair, Teaching Credentials, Sacramento State University College of Education

Kenrya Rankin  
President, Luminous Prose, LLC

Chrishirella Sutton  
Clinical Assistant Professor, Loyola University Chicago School of Education

Jessica Tang  
President, Boston Teachers Union

Helen Westmoreland  
Director, Family Engagement, National PTA
Silver Anniversary Sponsors

Individual Donors

- Rachel Brice, Tampa, FL
- Hedy Chang, San Francisco, CA
- Roberta Furger, Palo Alto, CA
- Emily Goff, Saint Paul, MN
- Anne Henderson, Washington, DC
- Councilmember Katie Valenzuela, Sacramento, CA
- Gina Martinez-Keddy, Sacramento, CA
- DeQuendre Neeley-Bertrand, Bowie, MD
- Carrie Rose, Sacramento, CA
- Helen Westmoreland, Alexandria, VA
- Anonymous Donor, United States
Support Parent Teacher Home Visits

Join us in celebrating the 25th anniversary of Parent Teacher Home Visits (PTHV) by contributing to its legacy. We’re proud of the work of our small, but mighty team, and we’re working to accelerate our impact. PTHV has been a transformative force in education, bridging the gap between families and teachers by fostering stronger relationships and creating a supportive learning environment for all. Your generous donations can enable PTHV to expand its reach and empower even more schools, districts, and communities with the tools and resources they need to help students thrive academically and socially. By giving, you are investing in our children’s future, promoting educational equity, and building stronger communities. Donate today and be a part of this incredible milestone as we continue to touch lives and expand opportunity, one home visit at a time.

Scan the QR code above or visit https://pthvp.org/donations/silver-anniversary-sponsorship/ to make a donation.
PARENT TEACHER HOME VISITS

www.pthvp.org

P.O. Box 189084
Sacramento, CA, 95818

916-448-5290

info@pthvp.org