

Bridging the Gap: Home Visits

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Teacher home visitations have begun to resurge and gain positive awareness amongst educators who see the viability in it. Nonetheless, I surmise to say that many of us would be passionately against such an act and define it as a social imposition.

I have for several years anticipated visiting my students prior to the first day of school or shortly thereafter but unfortunately, due to other priorities, I negated my proclivity to step into the world of my students.

This past fall, however, with some trepidation, I took the initiative and visited each of my fifteen students. I was somewhat anxious at first, but after being graciously welcomed into several homes, my fears and anxieties dissipated. I learned unquestionably more about my students in my home visits than I could have gleaned during the normal school day. It's enlightening to see where these kids are coming from and to sense their elation at having you in their homes.

Student A, age six, a new student and a new immigrant to Canada from the Philippines, greets me with a smile that would melt away any heart. Our home visit allows for me to learn a multiplicity of information that will guide my pedagogical strategies and methods to ensure success for Student A.

Student B, age four, can scarcely wait for his parents and I to finish our discourse before he procures my time for a quick game of Uno. Lately his parents have been quite busy with work, his older sister, and taking care of his baby brother, and he feels neglected and unheard.

Student C, age six, waits patiently for me to arrive. He enthusiastically greets me wearing his favourite pyjamas. He has spent the evening making cookies with his mom in order to share some with me. He ecstatically displays his Lego models and other creative crafts he has made for my perusal.

Student D, age five, is shy and reserved. During my visit, mom divulges that her husband has recently left her and their two small children, thus creating an enormous void in her daughter's life.

These four snapshots illuminate the diversity, richness and complexity of our families at my present school. During my visit I was able introduce myself and share positive attributes displayed by each child in class. I was given the opportunity to discover the family's strengths, talents, and concerns (traits I may be able to use or work on throughout the school year). I was able to encourage and uplift the families with prayer as well as promote open communication.

When we as teachers are able to recognize and understand the environment each child is coming from, we have improve our ability to assess the underlying skills and needs each child brings to class. Thus, we are better prepared to work with the student at school.

My primary focus for home visits this year was to build relationships, develop strong bonds with home and school, and construct a classroom that engages and benefits my students. It was truly an experience that inspired and blessed me; it authentically provided much insight into my students' world.