One Page Resource: *The Value of Home Visits*

Purpose:

Home Visits can be one of the first opportunities to promote family engagement. Research shows that the earlier families get involved in their children's educational process, the better students do in their school performance. Conducting Home Visits at the start of the school year or after family enrollment can lead to meaningful relationship-building between educators and families. Strong relationships help families and educators become co-advocates for children.

Home Visits can increase…

- academic achievement
- positive social behaviors
- school attendance

Home visits can…

- improve communication
- help families track their child's progress
- encourage families to support curriculum at home
- dispel fears and assumptions families may have about school
- promote trust and self-efficacy

Home visits help…

- educators understand the impact of a child's environment and school performance
- educators appreciate diverse family backgrounds

Who can do a home visit?

- Educators
- Directors
- Family Liaisons

First Steps

- Identify staff who will conduct visit; best if educators go in pairs.
- Notify supervisor of location and time of visit.

Scheduling

- Schedule a time of day that is convenient for families.
- Notify families in advance and indicate time, day, and how long the visit will last (30-45 minutes).

Location

- Home Visits can occur somewhere in the community (e.g., café, library, conference room, etc.) if families feel more comfortable with a different location than their home.

Prior to Visit

- Review enrollment records, family history, and cultural background.
- Make copies of pertinent and informational materials to hand out (e.g., school calendar, emergency procedures, community resources, etc.). Bring copies of consent/release of information forms (if necessary).

Share purpose of visit with families

- To learn about children.
  - Age, favorite toys, books, songs, TV shows, interests, dislikes, routines, allergies
  - Modifications or accommodations for the classroom or routines
- To learn about families.
  - Who's in the family
  - Language spoken
  - Cultural background, holidays, traditions
  - Profession/skills
  - Hobbies

One Page Resource: *The Value of Home Visits*

- To learn about communities.
  - Nearby stores, businesses, churches, museums, community centers, parks, hospitals, historical monuments, architecture, signage
  - Is the area rural or urban?
  - What other agencies or organizations reside in the community?
- To explore ways that the school and educators can better serve families.

Upon Arrival

- Be on time and dress appropriately.
- Set the tone (warm introduction, thank family for time and participation).
- Include all family members who want to participate.
- If possible, bring a picture of the classroom environment or program, card/board game, a children's book, or crayons/paper to share with the child/family during the visit. Take a picture of the family or ask the family for a token from home that can be used in the classroom.

During the Home Visit

- Show respect and empathy; avoid talking about negative things.
- Establish rapport through small talk:
  - "Tell me about your child."
  - "What does your child like best?"
  - "What are schools like in (country of origin)?"
  - "Tell me about (siblings or other family)."
- Ask about the hopes, dreams and goals families have for their children while in school.

Upon Departure

- Lay the groundwork for future family engagement events, such as family-educator conferences, upcoming fairs, literacy nights, etc.
- Provide families with your contact information and share information about community and school resources.
- Thank the family for their time; let them know you look forward to partnering.

After the Home Visit

- Document the visit and follow up on goals, referrals, next-step items.

Reflect

- How could you incorporate reflections of the family, its culture, or community in the classroom or lesson plans?

Adapted from: Mason, M. & Slavit-Ernst, G. (n.d.) Making your first ELL home visit: A guide for classroom teachers. Retrieved from Coloríncolorado.org.