

Home Visits

This is one of a series of evidence-based strategies to help states and school districts invest Covid relief aid effectively. Read all 18 strategies in FutureEd's [Covid Relief Playbook](#).

During the pandemic, home visits became an essential way for schools to connect with families. What started as an effort to distribute devices and WiFi hotspots morphed into a broader campaign to engage parents and locate students who were not participating in remote learning or had not enrolled in school at all. Research provides strong evidence that home visits can improve student attendance and achievement. The practice can also be a key step toward developing a broader family engagement framework.

THE RESEARCH

An [evaluation](#) of the Parent Teacher Home Visits program found that students whose families received at least one teacher visit a year were 21 percent less likely to be chronically absent than other students. When 10 percent or more of a school's students received home visits, the positive impact on absenteeism extended to the entire school. According to a 2016-17 school year study by Steven Sheldon of Johns Hopkins University, students attending these schools were more likely to achieve proficient scores on English language arts assessments than their peers at other schools. Sheldon looked at school year results for more than 100,000 students in kindergarten through eighth grade in four large, urban school districts.

An earlier [study](#) of 12 Washington, D.C. public schools by Johns Hopkins University in the 2013-14 school year found students whose families received home visits were more likely to read at grade level and less likely to be chronically absent. In North Carolina, a pilot program combined home visits with dedicated cell phones for

reaching parents of first- and second-grade students, among other interventions. The program reduced the prevalence of frequent absences by about 10 percent and improved communication between parents and teachers, according to a 2017 Duke University [study](#).

The Parent Teacher Home Visits program began in the Sacramento area two decades ago and now operates at more than 700 sites in 25 states. The model relies on some basic practices: voluntary visits arranged in advance with pairs of teachers; trained and compensated teachers; and a focus on relationship-building.

WHAT TO CONSIDER

Home visits can be part of a shift toward engaging parents and caregivers as full partners in education. This is especially important for low-income families of color, who often have less contact with their children's schools for a range of reasons, including employment obligations and a lack of transportation.

Home visits entail some costs, as teachers should be trained and compensated for visits that typically occur outside of school hours. The visits seem to work best with families of elementary school children and when teachers and parents continue to interact after the initial visit. Schools have found the intervention particularly helpful with families of English language learners.

In the most successful home visits, teachers meet with parents and caregivers with the goal of engaging them around their child's education. The first visit is focused on building a relationship. Teachers ask about the family's

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“hopes and dreams” for the child and learn about the challenges the family faces. They provide a connection to the school for parents who might not otherwise reach out. Relationship-building home visits are not designed to deliver explicit messages about absenteeism or achievement.

School districts should consult with local health departments to ensure that home visits can be conducted safely during the pandemic. If not, virtual home visits have shown success in connecting teachers and families, according to [Parents as Teachers](#), a parent engagement groups with its own home visiting model.

RESEARCH

- [Student Outcomes and Parent Teacher Home Visits: PROMISING](#)
- [The Family Engagement Partnership Student Outcome Evaluation: PROMISING](#)
- [A New Program to Prevent Primary School Absenteeism: PROMISING](#)

RESOURCES

- [Relational Parent Teacher Home Visits Boost Attendance](#)