

PICO National Network Case Study

Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project

In 1998 **Sacramento Area Congregations Together**, a PICO affiliate, brought parents and teachers together to look at how they could improve communication between home and school. They believed that if parents and teachers had better relationships and worked together as co-educators, children would do better in school. The solution they developed ultimately became the first large-scale parent engagement strategy based on teachers visiting their students' homes.



The Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project is based on a simple idea. Teachers receive training from their peers and from parents in how to successfully visit homes and build relationships of trust with parents. The first home visit focuses on establishing a connection between the parent and teacher. Later visits give teachers and parents a chance to discuss ways in which parents can support at home lessons that students are learning in school.

Teachers who visit homes find that it helps them connect with students in the classroom makes it easier to deal with behavior problems. Parents learn more about what their children are expected to learn and what they need to do to support them. Home visit training and practice provide the opportunity to **challenge assumptions** about the role of teachers and parent, **break down barriers**, and **insure accountability** for student success.

The results have been impressive. Schools that have adopted home visiting have seen markedly improved communication between parents and teachers, more parent involvement in school activities, reductions in discipline problems and increases in attendance rates. Annual evaluations by professors at Sacramento State University are finding that schools that have participated in home visiting for several years are beginning to see achievement gains over comparable schools. Click [here](#) to see the Home Visit Project evaluations.

The Home Visit model developed in Sacramento has been so successful that it provided the basis for state legislation won by PICO California. Since 1999 the Nell-Soto Home Visit legislation has provided \$30 million in funding for expansion of the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project to more than 600 schools. The Home Visit Project has been featured in: TIME Magazine, NPR, CNN, ABC World News Tonight; Education Week, Education World, The Urban Educator and Teacher Magazine.

In 2002 Sacramento ACT spun off the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project as a separate non-profit corporation led by members from ACT, Sacramento City Unified School District and Sacramento City Teachers Association. Funding from the Federal government 2002 helped fund an independent California Home Visiting Center (<http://www.scusd.edu/cahvcenter/>). In 2003-2004, the Home Visit Project trained over 1,015 educators from over 130 different school communities in cities across the United States.

The Home Visit Project represents an important policy innovation in urban education. In the past, school districts that have tried to mandate teacher visits to homes have failed. In contrast the Home Visit Project model is voluntary and community led and provides teachers with both training and stipends for the time they spend visiting homes after school. As a result teachers have embraced home visiting as a tool to aid their teaching, rather than one more demand on their time.

The Home Visit Project applies an important PICO principal that power is in relationships to schools. PICO builds strong organizations based on one to one relationship building meetings and the Home Visit Project takes this basic building block and teaches it to teachers. As Dr. Cowan who is leading the Sacramento State University evaluation, points out, face-to-face home visits are a common way of doing business in many of the low-income African-American, Latino and Asian communities served by the Sacramento Unified School District. PICO has taught a community-initiated practice to school systems that have come to relate to parents as clients. This simple idea has the potential to fundamentally change how schools relate to communities.

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