

# **WCSD Title I Parent Teacher Home Visit Project: Mid-Year Report (Fall 2011)**

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## ***WCSO Title I Parent Teacher Home Visit Project: Mid-Year Report (Fall 2011)***

The Washoe County School District (WCSO) and the Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) have partnered to bring the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project (PTHVP) to the district. PTHVP is a national model program that is intended to provide positive teacher home visits to families. Research has consistently highlighted the link between parent engagement in education and academic achievement. Furthermore, the most critical parent involvement is what happens at home; however, many parents need specific information on how to help and what to do ([www.pthvp.org/data.html](http://www.pthvp.org/data.html)).

Home visits have been identified as an effective tool for creating connections between home and school, as well as enhancing parent involvement in their child's education (Allen & Tracy, 2004). In the PTHVP model, parents are valued as co-educators and empowered to engage in their child's education in significant and meaningful ways. This approach differs from other models where the purpose of the visit involves assessment of need for services or addressing problematic behaviors or academic deficiencies. Additionally, PTHVP has demonstrated effectiveness in helping to build positive relationships between families and schools.

The introduction of PTHVP corresponds to the broader initiative of the district to actively engage families in education. **Envision 2015, WCSO's strategic plan that was adopted in the spring of 2010, includes "engage families and community partners" as one of its five strategic goals and "increase meaningful parent involvement and family engagement initiatives" as a key objective.** PTHVP also aligns to the parental involvement provisions in Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which calls for accountability for results, local control and flexibility, expanded parental choice, and effective and successful programs that reflect scientifically based research (NCLB, 2004). This type of intensive engagement in child's education in which teachers devote time to getting to know is also in alignment with WCSO's motto, "Every child, by name and face, to graduation."

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The purpose of the program is not limited to engaging families in the school system, but also addresses the need to enhance school-parent, parent-teacher, and teacher-student relationships. These vital relationships can have profound impacts on the student's ability to remain resilient in the face of challenging circumstances. Two other programs adopted by Title I during the 2009-2010 school year that exemplify this principle: (1) the addition of an Intervention Specialist to act as a liaison between the student, school, family, and community and (2) the Intergenerational Family Literacy program to engage families and children in simultaneous learning experiences through ESL and parenting instruction<sup>1</sup>. These programs are offered within the same triangle schools and intersections between these programs are thought to help reach the most at-risk students. This mid-year report summarizes the evaluation activities, findings, and recommendations to guide programmatic decisions and approaches for the spring semester of the program's third year .

## **Program Background**

PTHVP began in WCSD in September 2009 at three Title I secondary schools including Vaughn Middle School, Traner Middle School, and Hug High School. Since then, the program has grown to include 11 schools, nine elementary and two middle schools (see Table X). Teachers and other staff willing to participate in home visits from each school were trained in the PTHVP model and collaborated with Parent Involvement Facilitators (PIF) to schedule home visits. Teachers worked in teams of two when visiting families. A third person joined the visits and served as a translator when necessary.

## **Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project Model**

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**The concept behind the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project is simple. Rather than blaming each other, teachers and families come together, in a unique setting, as equal partners, to build trust and form a relationship where they can take the time to share dreams, expectations, experiences, and tools regarding the child's academic success. Once a relationship is formed, the partners are empowered, finding accountability with each other to make the necessary changes to insure that students experience academic and social success.**

[www.pthvp.org/history.html](http://www.pthvp.org/history.html)

The Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project was developed by Sacramento City Unified District in 1998 and has since become a nationally recognized model for home visits. The model is based on five tenets that shape the approach to home visits. Elements of the program include two visits throughout the year: the first visit is focused on relationship building between parents and school staff visitors; the second visit is centered on capacity building and information sharing. It is important for school visitors to provide parents with an

informational packet, or toolkit, during the first visit to ensure parents have relevant information in case a second visit does not occur. **The feature of the PTHVP that defines it as unique from other home visit approaches is its focus on relationship building: Visits are never made for punitive purposes and all students are equally likely to be asked to participate.** A visit to the home is viewed as an opportunity for teachers to build a positive relationship with the student and parents where enduring connections can be formed.

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### **PTHVP Core Tenets**

1. Families and teachers are equally important co-educators given that the family is the expert on the individual child while the teacher is the expert on the curriculum that must be mastered for success.
2. Before important information about academic status can be effectively shared, positive communication must be established and barriers addressed.
3. All students and families should be visited because targeting challenging students will only perpetuate the cycles of mistrust.
4. All families have the ability to assist their child in their academic success and that effective family involvement can happen in every home—especially in light of the educational research about rethinking exactly what is effective family involvement.
5. This project should be voluntary for all involved and that teachers should be compensated for their time.

[www.pthvp.org/history.html](http://www.pthvp.org/history.html)

### **Program Goals and Objectives**

The overarching goal of the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project at WCSD is *to build positive relationships with families and strengthen their capacity to effectively engage in their child's education at home and within the school environment.* The primary objectives are:

- Cultivate a welcoming and trusting relationship between families of school-aged children and the WCSD.
- Provide a foundation for engaging parents in their child's education throughout their child's academic career by (a) raising awareness among parents and guardians regarding school policies that relate to their child's academic success and, (b) providing families with knowledge, tools, and strategies that will help them engage in their child's education at home.
- Improve the academic achievement of students and thereby improve their chances for college and career success.

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Additional goals of the program include:

- Provide a foundation for engaging parents in their child’s education throughout their child’s academic career.
- Improve the academic achievement of students receiving home visits and thereby improve their chances for college and career success.
- Adopt a train-the-trainer approach to ensure sustainability and extension of the program across all Title I schools.

## **Evaluation Approach**

The research and evaluation team within the Department of Accountability conducted the evaluation of the PTHVP in partnership with Title I and PIRC. The research and evaluation team together developed a formative and summative evaluation plan at the onset of the program. The first year evaluation focused heavily on process data and fidelity to implementation. The key findings of the evaluation of year one informed the direction of the evaluation of year two. The second year evaluation expanded to also incorporate evidence of outcome attainment. Following two years of successful implementation, the third year evaluation continues to expand data collection processes to include more testimonials from teachers about their experiences in the program. This scaffold design serves provide information about whether school sites continue to implement the program with fidelity and guide implementation for future expansion across WCSD. The primary goals of the evaluation were:

1. Gather and report evidence of short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes associated with the Title I Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project.
2. Facilitate the use of information gleaned from the evaluation to inform the decision-making process regarding future implementation and expansion of the project within the WCSD.

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## **Evaluation Questions**

The guiding evaluation questions focused on three important variables: (a) implementation and perception of PTHVP, (b) home-school relationships, and (c) student success. A fourth question focus was added in the second year of the program to explore teacher level impacts.

### **Key Evaluation Questions for Implementation and Perception of PTHVP**

- Was the program implemented with fidelity?
- What are the challenges of implementing PTHVP?
- Is the project valued as an effective educational strategy among project stakeholders?
- What are suggestions for improvement?

### **Key Evaluation Questions for Home-School Relationships**

- How have home visits influenced communication between families and WCSD?
- How has the project affected the relationships between teachers, students, and families?
- Has the program shaped parent's perception of their child's education, schools, and teachers?

### **Key Evaluation Questions for Student Success**

- What is the impact of home visits on indicators of student success?
- How have behaviors related to academic achievement been influenced by the home visits?
- Are families more engaged in their child's education in the home and community environments as a result of home visits? If so, in what ways?

### **Key Evaluation Questions for Teacher Quality**

- How has participation in home visits influenced teacher engagement, motivation, and effectiveness?

## **Data Sources**

The evaluation employed an emergent design to allow for flexibility to accommodate unforeseen growth and change related to PTHVP. The evaluation employed two approaches including (1) broad survey data collection from all program sites and (2)

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intensive data collection, including group interviews with school home visit teams and telephone interviews with parents. Data sources are described below:

*Program documentation and time logs.* The collection and review of program documentation provided contextual information about the program. Process information was collected from home visit logs that were submitted to the Title I office for stipend awards.

*Reflection Sheets:* All teachers completed a brief one-page reflection sheet after every visit to help them reflect on what they learned about their students and the students' family, what additional follow-up was needed, and next steps for maintaining contact with the family throughout the school year. Information obtained in reflection sheets provide a brief snapshot of what occurs during home visits and what impact they have on teachers, students, and parents.

*Implementation Survey:* A paper and pencil survey was given to all participants who attended the end-of-semester workshop on November 30, 2011. Respondents were asked to identify program participants at their school and to describe implementation characteristics of the PTHVP within their schools. Information obtained from the implementation survey was used by program leaders for program planning as the program moved into the second year of implementation.

*School Comparisons on Achievement and Discipline.* Several indicators are used to monitor impact on student achievement over time. These include: (1) The percent of students achieving proficiency in reading and math on Nevada State Criterion Referenced Test (CRT) for students in grades 3-8; (2) Changes in scores from baseline MAP tests to mid-year MAP test; and (3) the number of office discipline referrals (ODR). Students who received a home



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visit are compared to a matched sample of students at their school site on these end-of-year data points.

## Evaluation Findings

### Participation Logs

In Fall 2011, eleven schools participated in the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project in WCSD, including two middle schools (see Table X). A total of 44 teachers/staff participated in 130 home visits during Fall 2011. All teachers listed the student ids of the homes they intended to visit prior to school start (n = 117) When they submitted the logs of students' homes they actually visited at the end of the semester, teachers had actually visited an additional twelve homes than they had originally committed to visiting. However, when comparing the student id's of the homes teachers intended to visit with the student id's of the homes teachers actually visited, there were only 50 matches. That is, teachers only visited 50 of the original 117

**Table XX. Number of teachers and homes visited during Fall 2011 school year.**

School	Teachers Participated	Homes Visited
Anderson ES	2	3
Bennett ES	4	14
Booth ES	4	18
Duncan ES	8	10
Kate Smith ES	6	40
Mitchell ES	8	3
Risley ES	2	7
Sun Valley ES	4	4
Traner MS	2	7
Vaughn MS	2	3
Veterans ES	2	21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>130</b>

(42.7%) students' homes they intended to visit at the start of the school year.

### Reflection Sheets

Following every home visit, teachers had the option of completing a brief one-page reflection sheet about their experiences. These reflection sheets served both a programmatic and evaluative function. They encourage teachers to reflect on their experiences and brainstorm strategies to better support their students' education. All teachers were asked to provide feedback in five areas: (1) what they learned about the

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parent/family; (2) what they learned about the student; (3) what parents comments, questions, suggestions, and desires were discussed; (4) any additional information and/or follow up was needed; and (5) what contact information and invitation to participate in school activities were provided?

A total of 112 reflection sheets were submitted to the Title I office during the Fall 2011 semester. These sheets provide a brief glimpse into the discussions that occur between teachers and families during each visit and provide some valuable information about the education barriers faced and support provided by families to students in WCSD.

### **Learning about parents and families**

Nearly all teachers commented on the many ways parents and families already supported their child's learning and their desire to learn new ways to further engage in their child's education. As one teacher noted, "Her parents are very interested in her education and are very proactive about finding resources to help her learn. Her parents have set time to work with her on her homework and they model the importance of homework. They are teaching her good school work habits because they make sure she turns in her homework when it is due." Another teacher commented, "Both parents have different schedules to make sure there is no daycare and the kids are always with family." "The family is very united and loving and protective of the children, especially the youngest who is special needs. Mom takes a lot of pride in her home which is beautiful! Mom likes to keep to herself. Mom and dad have lived in the US for 20 years and mom feels embarrassed that she does not speak English." "We got to experience each of the kid's own personalities. We were able to learn about each of the children as individuals. All her kids expressed a desire to be a doctor because their older brother has asthma, which he has been hospitalized for on several occasions. All of the kids are very happy and are very loved. They like school and they want to come to school."

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“Her mother expressed her desire for all her kids to finish high school because she did not. She realizes the opportunities that will or will not be available for her kids if they do not have a diploma or degree.”

*Barriers to education.*

Much of the information teachers noted about parents and families in reflection sheets surrounded family circumstances that might affect students’ ability to do well in school. For example, nearly all teachers commented on the economic hardship faced by families, “[Parents] are concerned their child may be on the spectrum for autism. Recently had a death in the family. House has been broken into. Lost a lot of their possessions.” “The family is headed by a single mother. She works graveyard and shares her house with a friend and her three kids. The mother bought a house through Habitat for Humanity. She has health issues and recently required an operation.”

A number of other teachers also commented on environment and lack of resources in the household that might affect learning, “There is no computer in the home so no access to Infinite Campus or IXL math program.” Others commented on the difficulty some of their students might face completing their homework given the large number of family members living in the household, “There are seven children ranging from age 11 to 3 years old. Two uncles, two grandparents, one step-father, one mother and four dogs live in the house. Finding space for quiet work might be difficult.”

“Parent doesn’t feel as confident in math-helping with homework.”

**Parents & Families: Key Points**

*Education assets:*

- Love and support
- Homework help
- Social networks (e.g. grandparents who can help with homework)

*Barriers to education:*

- Economic hardship
- Lack of resources (e.g. space to do homework, parents available to help with work)
- Transiency
- Parents’ past education experiences
- Lack of familiarity with resources

*Strategies to help families engage:*

- Set up IC and IXL math programs on home computer
- Help enroll students in afterschool/mentoring programs
- Provide student specific examples on homework
- Provide additional books and reading materials
- Sign parents up to volunteer in classroom
- Invite parents to speak about their culture at school events
- Inform them of resources available at school (computer lab, Spanish-speaking staff member)

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Teachers also discussed parents' own experiences with education growing up. many parents did not have much education, though many expressed an interest in attending night or online classes to finish their education. "Parent would like greater communication between home and school. Also feels uncomfortable coming to schools in the evenings." "She wants to stay for afterschool program so she can get help and also visit with her friends but her mom will not let her because she does not want to have her walk home alone when it gets late."

After gaining insight into some of the familial circumstances that might affect their students' education, many teachers identified strategies and new ideas to help support students' learning. For example, "[We] helped them set up access to Infinite Campus, talked with them about the parent classes offered throughout the district, and helped answer questions they have regarding high school for next year." Another teacher commented, "I was able to think of new strategies to support student learning and doing homework at home. I would like to include with the homework some examples."

### **What Did I Learn about Student?**

A number of teachers commented on the similarities and differences in their students' behavior while in class versus in their home. "Although the student was extremely quiet at school, only talking in whispers, she was quite loud at home! She loves school!" "At home, my student has regressed since her dad left [deployed in Afghanistan]. She acts shy a lot and is almost never like that in my classroom." "[Student name] has the same caring, fun attitude as he does at school." "We got to experience each of the kids own personalities. We were able to learn about each of the children as individuals."

Teachers also commented that the visits provided some valuable insight into their students' academic, attendance, behavior problems, "We learned she had a hearing loss in early childhood which explains part of her learning disability." Another teacher noted that learning about one family's culture helped her understand why they were often late to parent-teacher conferences and other events, as the parents described that in their culture,

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they were very “laid-back” about time.” One teacher noted that, “When mom and boyfriend are fighting, mom will keep her child (my student) home to cuddle with.” “[Child] is late for school due to being scared to walk to school in the mornings.”

### **Outcome of Visits and Steps Taken to Further Engage Families**

Nearly all teachers commented on the excitement, joy, and gratitude parents, students, and families expressed about their teacher having taken the time to visit them in their home. “Families were grateful for the materials and supplies.” “We made a home visit to this student’s house last spring. Because of the visit, David began reading 20 minutes per day. Today’s visit reinforced the importance of daily reading which was not occurring regularly.” “The student loves to read and was excited to show us her growing library of books. She was very proud of it.” “Mom shared pictures of the trip the family just took to Mexico for a first communion and confirmation we had a great time talking and laughing. When it was time to leave she asked if we could stay longer and said, ‘time went by too fast!’”

Teachers provided information on both school-based and non-school-based services and resources available to them including:

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wishing Tree</li> <li>• Salvation Army</li> <li>• Toys for Tots</li> <li>• Food Bank of Northern Nevada</li> <li>• D++ uniforms</li> <li>• Big Brothers, Big Sisters</li> <li>• GLAD</li> <li>• Children’s Cabinet</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SES tutoring</li> <li>• Art and music programs</li> <li>• GATE</li> <li>• VFW food basket</li> <li>• Family Resource Center</li> <li>• Parent University</li> <li>• Adult ESL classes</li> <li>• Boys and Girls Club</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School computer hours</li> <li>• School-site translator’s contact information</li> <li>• Parent Portal</li> <li>• Parent Resource Center</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|

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Many other teachers also offered personal services, with several teachers helping the families to set up Infinite Campus and IXC math tutorials on their home computer, and one teacher even offering her own personal time to help a mother complete job applications after school.

At the conclusion of every visit, teachers were asked to invite parents to at least one upcoming school event and provide their contact information to parents. These events include Parent Math Nights, Fall festivals, Multicultural Nights, Family Evening Activities, Parent-Teacher conferences, upcoming field trips, and opportunities to volunteer in the classroom.

### **Implementation Survey**

Of the 25 individuals who attended the hour-long, mid-year workshop for the PTHVP, 22 opted to participate in the implementation survey. Three did not participate because they had never conducted a home visit in the past and were attending the workshop to learn more about the program. The majority of participants were teachers ( $n = 19$ ); counselors ( $n = 2$ ), and PIF ( $n = 1$ ). Most teachers indicated that they usually conducted home visits with one other person, although one teacher usually completed them alone while another participant indicated that they usually conducted visits with one another teacher and a translator. When asked whether they had submitted a log of student homes visited for “all”, “most”, “some”, or “none” of the homes they had visited, all but one teacher indicated that they had submitted logs for all homes visited.

Teachers were also asked an open-ended question about how students at their school were selected for home visits. Most teachers indicated that they at least partially selected students based on “high need” ( $n = 20$ ), whether academic, social, or behavioral in nature. Two teachers reported visiting all of students’ homes. Only one participant

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indicated that students were selected randomly, which is the model of selection advocated by the original Parent Teacher Home Visit Project model. Nine teachers indicated they selected students by emotional or social need (e.g. appearance, knowledge of family situation etc.). Four teachers factored in their desire to improve their relationship with a students' parents (e.g. the parent was shy or quiet or lack of parental involvement). Nine teachers indicated they selected students based on poor academic performance, and another six teachers indicated they selected students based on their classroom behavior problems. Three teachers based their selection on the number of siblings that attend the school so as to maximize the number of students visited at one time. Five teachers reported that they also visited the homes of students outside of the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (i.e. they volunteered their time rather than receiving Title I stipend funds). Two

teachers did so because they chose to visit all students in their classrooms, while three others reported doing so to help students with specific behavioral or academic problems.

**Table XX. Perception of administrative support for PTHVP and impact of PTHVP on parents and students.**

	Mean
The administration at my school fully supports my involvement with the PTHVP	4.55
The Title I administrative office fully supports my involvement with the PTHVP.	4.59
I believe my involvement with the PTHVP has had a positive impact on my relationship with students' parents.	4.77
Overall, I believe the PTHVP program has had a positive impact on parents' relationship with my school.	4.86
I believe the PTHVP has had a positive impact on my students' classroom behavior.	4.48
I believe the PTHVP has had a positive impact on my students' academic achievement.	4.30

Finally, to gauge the impact of the PTHVP on teachers' relationships with their students and parents, and their students' classroom behavior and academic achievement, teachers were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement to a series of 5-point Likert style questions (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Teachers were also asked to rate the quality of support provided both by their

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school administrators and the Title I office, “The administration at my school adequately supports my involvement in the PTHVP.” Table XX below reports the means for each of the Likert-style items. In general, participants were extremely positive about their experiences visiting the homes of their students and perceived that they had strong administrative support both at their school and from Title I.

At the conclusion of the implementation survey, all teachers were asked whether they were willing to participate in a one-hour focus group with the program evaluator. Ten participants agreed to participate in the focus group, which will provide an opportunity to further discuss the site-specific implementation strategies at each school and to further assess whether the program has been implemented with fidelity.

### **Limitations**



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### **References**

Allen, S., & Tracy, E. (2004). Revitalizing the value of home visiting by school social workers. *Children and Schools*, 26 (4), 197-208.