

# PARENT TEACHER HOME VISIT PROGRAM 2021-2022 EVALUATION FINDINGS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Washoe County School District has been implementing the Parent Teacher Home Visit Program (PTHVP) for over 10 years to foster connections between educators and families. In the 2021-2022 school year, the Office of Accountability explored areas of program strengths and opportunities for improvement through a series of focus groups with staff and students. This qualitative approach allowed for discovery of nuanced aspects of the program experience that are often hidden when examining quantitative outcomes alone. These findings complement the annual implementation and outcome evaluation of PTHVP.

### Implementation

PTHVP implementation was generally strong during SY 2021-2022:

- 181 staff at 24 schools participated
- 9 schools visited at least 10% of their student populations, indicating high levels of implementation
- About half (49%) of visits were conducted virtually (Bridge visit) and 51% were in-person

There was strong staff participation, but challenges to full participation were still evident. For example, some staff participated in the initial training but did not complete visits. Survey results indicated several common barriers to home visits that affect participation:

- Many staff do not have enough time to conduct home visits, or they have other competing responsibilities
- Some families and staff do not want to participate in home visits
- Home visits are sometimes not encouraged by school administrators or other teachers

Encouraging (and possibly incentivizing) veteran staff members to team with newer staff members to participate in training and conduct home visits could increase full participation among staff.

### Outcomes

Program outcomes were mixed:

*Social emotional competencies.* Home visits, social emotional competencies (SECs), and school climate are positively related. **Students who received a home visit in grades 5 or higher rated themselves higher on most SEC scales on the climate survey compared to students who received a Bridge visit or did not receive a home visit.**

*Attendance.* Past research on program impacts to attendance show that students who received a home visit had lower absenteeism rates than students who did not receive a visit (Sheldon & Jung, 2018). This year, however, **there was no relationship between home visits and attendance**, and in some instances, absenteeism was higher for students who received a home visit.<sup>1</sup> There were many barriers to attendance this year, including disruptions to transportation, that could have affected these results. Future evaluations could examine exact timing of home visits and whether short-term attendance improvements are seen following a home visit that were not visible in this analytical approach. Further, some evidence indicates that students may have been selected for a home visit based on poorer attendance, and these multiple attendance barriers could not be addressed through a single home visit.

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<sup>1</sup> When controlling for prior year risk and school-level implementation, the relationship is not significant.

## INTRODUCTION

The Parent Teacher Home Visits Program (PTHVP) connects families to educators and schools through meaningful home visits conducted by school staff. PTHV follows a two-visit model in which the first visit in the fall focuses on hopes and dreams and the second visit in the spring focuses on academics. WCSD follows the [research-based model](#) based out of Sacramento and follows the 5 core practices of the program:

- Visits are always voluntary for educators and families, arranged in advance
- Teachers are trained, and compensated for visits outside their school day
- Focus of the first visit is relationship building; we discuss hopes and dreams
- No targeting – visit all or a cross-section of students so there is no stigma
- Educators conduct visits in pairs, and after the visit, reflect with their partner

In the 2021-2022 school year, 24 schools in the Washoe County School District conducted home visits with at least 1% of their student population. All schools that applied for the program were accepted. To meet the increased demand, staff were instructed to focus on the first visit in an attempt to meet as many families as they could. The focus of this evaluation is on those students who received at least one home visit.

Virtual visits, referred to as Bridge Visits, were offered for the first time in SY 2020-21 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Depending on family and/or preference, staff conducted in-person home visits or virtual visits. The flexibility of two home visit formats provided a unique evaluation opportunity to compare the approaches.

## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this evaluation is to show the impacts of parent teacher home visits on school and student outcomes in the Washoe County School District. Past evaluations have explored staff and family perceptions of the program through surveys and examined student outcomes through administrative data. The current evaluation expands on past research by using both qualitative and quantitative methods, including focus groups with students and staff to learn about the conditions surrounding implementation of the program. Staff in the Office of Accountability worked collaboratively with staff in the Department of Family-School Partnerships to collect data about the program to answer both implementation and outcome evaluation questions.

Past evaluations of PTHVP in WCSD found that schools consistently follow at least one of the five core practices of the program. Specifically, survey data from staff suggests that staff are not targeting students and are conducting visits in pairs (e.g., Christiansen & Morning, 2020). Previous evaluations have set a strong foundation of research on the program in WCSD using

survey and administrative data, and this year to expand on those findings, we shifted the resources into answering some of the research questions that can be challenging to answer with a survey. Thus, instead of a longer parent and staff survey, we conducted focus groups with students and staff who participated in the program. At three schools, we conducted 7 focus groups with 23 students, and 5 focus groups with 11 staff members.

Engaging children in focus groups can be more challenging than engaging adults because children are still developing socially, cognitively, and linguistically. Focus groups facilitators used several strategies to help students feel comfortable in the focus groups and ready to share their experiences (Gibson, 2012). This included spending a few minutes talking about the purpose and the rules of the focus group (e.g., letting students know they do not have to answer a question, that they should take turns, and no teasing or making fun of other students), starting with an engaging question unrelated to the focus group (most facilitators asked students “if you could be principal for the day, what rule would you change at your school?”, and finally, students were asked to draw a picture of their home visit. Allowing students to draw or write about their home visit can help them remember what occurred, and also make them more open to talking about the visit. In other words, it is a fun activity for the students, but also an important data tool when conducting focus groups with children (Gibson, 2012). Several of the drawings from the focus groups are included in the appendix (any identifying information that a student included on the drawing was redacted prior to being scanned).

Quantitative data was examined for outcomes that might be associated with home visits such as attendance and social emotional competencies. While PTHV is often tracked at the household level, the following report uses analyses at the student level so statistical analyses have a consistent unit of analysis (i.e., the student), and do not violate assumptions of independence and multicollinearity. Further, although many students in pre-kindergarten receive visits, their data such as attendance are not tracked by the district in the same way as students in K-12. Thus, pre-kindergarten students are excluded from the analysis. Through both qualitative and quantitative analyses, we explored the following research questions:

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

### IMPLEMENTATION

1. At each school site, how many educators who attended the PTHV training completed at least one home visit?
  - a. For the educators who attended the training but did not participate in home visits during the school year, what were the reasons for not following through with home visits?

2. How many schools participating in PTHV visited at least 10% of their students (either in-person or virtually) during the 2021-2022 school year?
    - a. What percentage of visits were in-person at the family's home? What percentage of visits were virtual?
    - b. How many families received one visit? How many families received at least two visits?
  3. Are schools and educators upholding the five core practices of PTHV? For instance, is the focus of the first visit on relationship-building and reflecting with their partners after the visit?
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## OUTCOMES

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### *SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES*

4. To what extent does conducting home visits shift staff mindsets? For instance, do staff report reduced implicit bias after the visits? If so, is there a difference between virtual versus in-person home visits?
  5. To what extent do home visits build positive connections and promote strong relationships between families and schools? Do these visits and relationships serve as a protective factor for both students and teachers during COVID?
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### *LONG-TERM OUTCOMES*

6. Are there differences in attendance, social emotional competencies, and perceptions in school climate among students who receive home visits? Does this differ based on whether a student received a home visit vs. a Bridge visit?

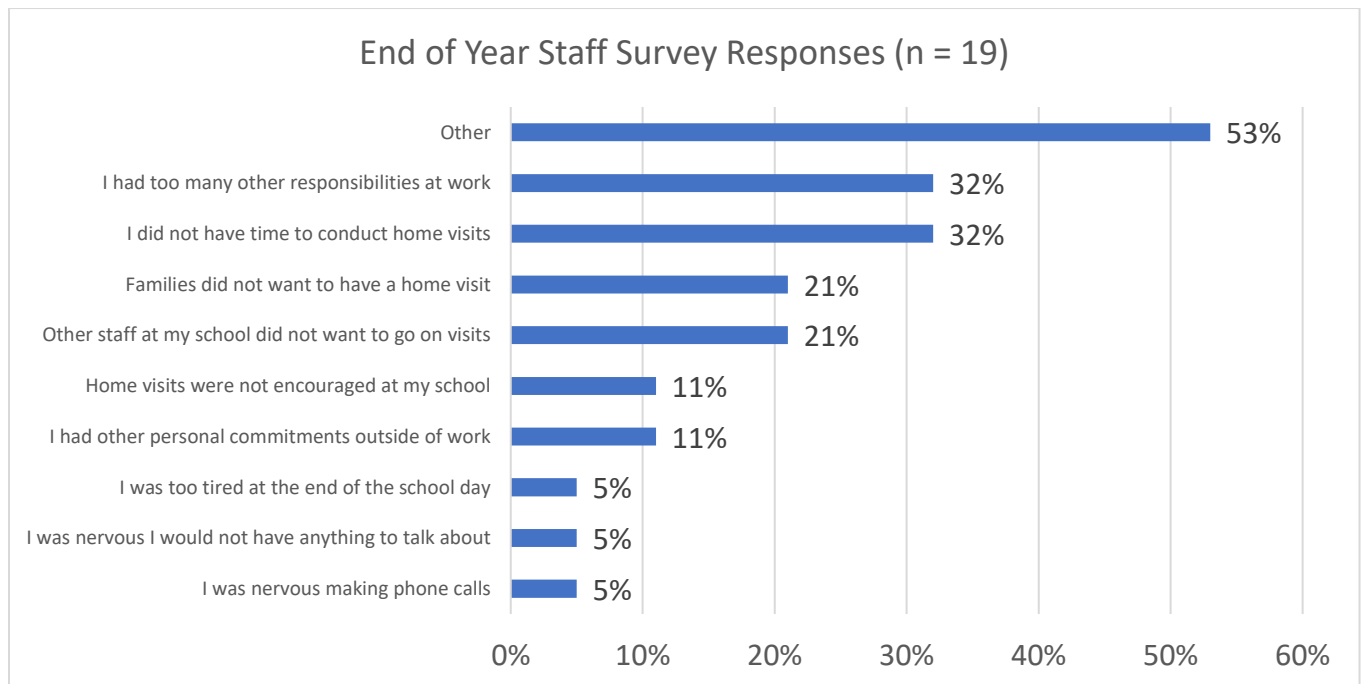
## IMPLEMENTATION

### RESEARCH QUESTION 1: STAFF PARTICIPATION IN PTHV

#### ENGAGING STAFF: SURVEY RESULTS

During the 2021-2022 SY, 181 Staff members (166 certified, 11 classified, 3 administrators, and 1 unknown classification) participated in home visits. There were, however, staff who attended PTHV trainings but did not go on home visits. At the end of the year, 105 staff were identified as having attended the training, but did not go on home visits. These staff members were invited to participate in a survey to answer questions as to why they were unable to go on a home visit this year. The survey was sent out at the end of the year, but despite multiple reminders, only 19 people responded.

Figure 1 shows the results from the survey. The most common reasons for not being able to go on home visits were too many responsibilities at work, lack of time, families did not want to have a home visit, and other staff at the school did not want to go on a home visit. People who responded “other” elaborated in the comments and the responses ranged from the site coordinator not encouraging home visits, scheduling conflicts between families and staff, no other staff to go with, and the logistics around planning home visits.



**Figure 1. End-of-year staff survey results.**



## ENGAGING STAFF: FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Staff engagement was further explored in the staff focus groups. The staff in participating focus groups were primarily veteran staff who are very engaged in parent teacher home visits, but they were still able to offer insight as to why some of their colleagues choose not to participate, and possible ways to increase participation. Staff in 4 out of the 5 focus groups discussed the importance of having experienced staff help newer staff with initial visits.

*“It might help to have, on their first couple of home visits have somebody go with them and show them. Instead of just trying to throw them in and they struggle their way through. I had somebody who was experienced, the other [grade-level] teacher did home visits the year before I did, I went through the training and once I was trained, I went with her. And that was really, really helpful.”*

*“I needed to do it 4 or 5 times and go with somebody right on their coattails to see how it’s done and gain their confidence so that I can do this.”*

Further, going with other staff not only helps newer staff feel comfortable with home visits, but several people also mentioned it helped them build stronger relationships with their colleagues in general. One teacher mentioned that when they switched schools, they did not know a lot of the other staff, and home visits were a great way to build better working relationships with other teachers in the school. Staff from two focus groups even mentioned that going on parent teacher home visits was the best part of their job and that it is an important part of the overall job of being an educator.

*“It’s not like making copies, this is the fun part. For me, this is the fun part of my day. I look forward to it.”*

*“I feel like sometimes they forget that this is part of...I don’t want to say part of the job, but you know family engagement is part of the job, it’s one of our standards.”*

A commonly cited reason for not participating in home visits that focus group staff mentioned was the uncertainty around home visits and the time commitment. One staff member compared going on those initial visits like going on a blind date. Another staff member recalled being very nervous the first time they went on a home visit and added how helpful it was to go with an experienced teacher:

*“I was really nervous, even to schedule a home visit. Once you do a couple, and if you do it with somebody who has already done them, it helps. Because they show you the steps to go through, and I have actually taken a few with me who are brand new, and we’ve gone and done them too, to help them get their feet wet and be comfortable.”*

Consistent with the survey findings, staff in three out of the five focus groups discussed how time can be a significant barrier. For instance, one staff member mentioned how some are very strict about their contract hours and do not want to work outside those hours. Others mentioned that even if staff want to go on home visits, schedules are often too busy and other things will take priority.

*“Finding the time after school [is challenging] because everybody is just so darn exhausted by the end of the day, they just want to go home, they have responsibilities, especially the ones that have kids.”*

*“I think what happens sometimes is that teachers get super busy in their day and now it’s 2:30 and home visits are the last thing on their mind. Even though in the back of their mind they are like ‘I’ve gotta do this, I want to add this to what I’m doing.’”*

One teacher added that yes, time can be a barrier. However, they made the point that if implemented well, home visits can often save time and make their job easier in the long run:

*“It’s always to do with time, that’s like 99% of the issues you hear; I just don’t have the time. But at the same time, these kids that we are having problems in school, you won’t have problems with them if you build a relationship. So where do you want to go? Do you want to put the time in up front?”*

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#### STAFF: CLASSIFIED VS. CERTIFIED

At the end of each focus group, staff are asked to provide any additional feedback about PTHV they think is important for the district to know. Staff in two out of the five focus groups discussed the disparity in pay between certified and classified staff who go on home visits. This also includes staff who are part-time and not necessarily eligible for pay for home visits, but would be a valuable person to have participating.

*“A lot of certified staff don’t want to participate in home visits with classified staff because they are only paid their hourly rate. Where then they hear teachers are making \$30 for that hour, or \$50 for that hour and they’re like, “what the heck, do we not matter?” We have heard that from a few classified people who get trained and signed up and didn’t realize.”*

*“A lot of times in the training they will pay the certified people but not the classified, it’s like they put the classified people on a different level. Well they are same job doing the same darn thing that everybody else is doing. So really there should be a sense of equality, it shouldn’t be you’re certified and you’re this classified, if you want to be behind this program, it’s all for one and one for all.”*

*“[The classroom aide] is a 27-hour employee, so she’s a half an hour shy of benefits. And they won’t let her go on any, because of that half an hour, home visits would push her over. It’s very disheartening the way the district chooses to do that. She’s my translator for all my Spanish-speaking families, and she’s really come through with the kids and the fact that she’s in my classroom building those relationships with them and is really frustrating that she’s not allowed to.”*

Engaging staff is critical to strong PTHV implementation at schools. A good rule of thumb of strong home visit implementation is to visit at least 10% of the students in that school. As such, we examined how many schools were reaching that 10% threshold, discussed next.

## RESEARCH QUESTION 2: SCHOOL-LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION

### NUMBER OF VISITS

PTHV recommends that schools visit at least 10% of their students to see a schoolwide change (Sheldon & Jung, 2018). We examined the total number of students who received a visit, and divided that by the total number of students enrolled on count day to determine approximately what percentage of students received a visit. We rounded that number up to the 0.5 decimal place and found that 9 schools visited at least 10% of their students, indicating high levels of implementation. Six schools visited between 5-9% of their students, and 9 schools visited less than 5% of their students.

We examined how many *students* received a home visit during the 2021-2022 school year. Throughout the year, PTHV tracks how many households receive a visit, however, for evaluation purposes, we track at the student level because tracking outcomes like attendance and social emotional competencies has to be done at the student level. A total of 1,159 students received a home visit; 71% of students received one visit, 28% of students received 2 visits, and 1%, or 12 students, received three visits. There was an even split between students who received a home or in-person visit and those who received a Bridge visit: 51% of students received a home visit and 49% received a Bridge visit.

### ALLOCATIONS

Staff in one of the focus groups discussed the importance of allocating sufficient funds to schools that are committed to strong PTHV implementation. The staff recognized the importance of having resources for home visits at multiple schools, but it is important to ensure that high-implementing schools receive sufficient allocations to sustain their efforts.

*“At the beginning of the year when you sign your paperwork you are allocated so many visits. It used to be allocated so many visits because there’s only, let’s say 9 Title I schools*

*that are able to be in the program. So the money that they provide was divided up amongst those 9 schools. Well now they have opened up that window to pretty much any school that wanted to do the home visits, because it is powerful. But what that did is it cut those numbers down that you are allowed to do so that chopped us way low, now because other people aren't doing the program or carrying the numbers, we are able to pick up those numbers and still roll with it but that wouldn't be the case if other schools got behind it, and that could be a potential problem when you are limited."*

### Implementation Key Findings

- 181 staff at 24 schools participated in home visits
- Common barriers to staff participation are:
  - Not enough time / too many other responsibilities
  - Families or other staff at the school not wanting to go on home visits
  - Site coordinator not encouraging visits
- Going on visits with veteran staff, and encouraging veteran staff to go with newer staff, can be helpful in increasing staff participation
- 9 schools visited at least 10% of their students
- Compensation for certified and classified staff is not always equitable

### RESEARCH QUESTION 3: 5 CORE PRACTICES

To answer the third research question, are schools and educators upholding the five core practices of PTHV, we reviewed administrative data and also conducted focus groups with students and staff. Program administrative data reveal that 100% of visits were conducted in pairs and that educators were trained and paid for visits. Further, while visits are encouraged among staff and families, there was no evidence in the student or staff focus groups that visits were not voluntary, thus upholding the core practices that visits are voluntary, teachers are trained and compensated, and educators conduct visits in pairs.

We did a deeper exploration of how staff were targeting and recruiting students. One of the core practices is that specific students are not targeted and that staff visit a cross-section of students so there is no stigma associated with receiving a home visit. As such, we asked about how staff invite students and which students they invite to have a home visit. There was only one staff member who indicated they take a truly random approach by taking their class roster, cutting it up with scissors, and randomly picking students to receive home visits.

While other staff did not take a randomized approach, they did not necessarily target specific students based on risk-level. The most common strategy for scheduling home visits was to invite other staff related to that student or that family. For instance, if a student was receiving ELD services, staff might pair up with the EL teacher at that school. Another instance is when that student had a sibling, staff will go with a staff member who teaches that student's sibling in another grade-level. A third approach to this is that a teacher will ask another staff member from the next grade level, so a student can start to get to know teachers that they might have in the following school year. Other educators invited their entire class. Table 1 shows the common strategies cited in focus groups for recruiting students and families, and how often they were mentioned (out of five focus groups).

**Table 1. Strategies for recruiting families.**

Strategy	Number of times cited in the focus groups
Invite related staff	4
Siblings	3
Invite the Whole Class	3
Random	1

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## STUDENT AND FAMILY REACTIONS

While all visits were voluntary for both families and staff, families can still often have some initial hesitancy with participation that can be a barrier for the program. Even if families later do go on a visit and find value in the program, there can often be initial hesitancy to participation. As such, understanding how staff can best engage families is important to reduce hesitancy if they are unfamiliar with the model. This ensures the program remains voluntary, but students and families might be more open to participation with an initial better understanding of what the visit is about.

The student focus groups revealed what some of the initial hesitancy to participate in a home visit might look like. Several students across multiple focus groups expressed initial concern about the visit and were worried that teachers were going to talk about their grades. One student even added that his parent's initial reaction was that their child was in trouble at school:

*"[My] parents were mad at me at first because they thought I was in trouble. But once they learned I wasn't in trouble it was okay."*

*"I've never had a teacher come to my house before. I didn't really know what they were going to talk about, and I was nervous they were going to talk about grades."*

*"I was shy because I was scared to tell my mom how I'm doing."*

*"Last year when I did it I was really quiet. I was nervous and didn't know what to say. And I didn't know what they were going to say about me and what they were doing. That's what scared me."*

Staff also had input on their experiences when they first reach out to families. Staff indicated that a lot of the initial reactions they get from families is hesitancy if they are unfamiliar with the program. One staff member took the perspective as a parent herself and admitted that she too might be uncertain of her reaction if her child's teacher asked to visit them in the home.

*"As a parent you still feel like they're going to be judging you or be criticizing you and feel like a lot of these parents like, I don't know if they're thinking that we're there to see how they live or what quality of life, so it's really breaking that and then letting them know it's now about that it's about me getting to know you and your family a little better so."*

*“When you reach out, some of the families get nervous and they’re like, “well why do you want to come? And what are you going to look for?”*

*“I’ve had some parents who were like “you’re not coming to my house, no way.”*

*“A lot of them are kinda hesitant because they don’t really understand what it is about and I don’t know that they are comfortable having you come into their home. Once I usually explain to them what it entails, they are more open to doing it.”*

Another common theme from the student focus groups was that students were very concerned about the cleanliness of their homes. Students expressed feeling almost pressured to ensure their homes looked clean before staff came over. While staff are often excited to see where families live and build relationships in the home, students and families might be apprehensive about opening their home, and might even fear judgment. This could be an underlying reason why some families might feel hesitant toward the home visit program.

*“We had to clean our house to make sure it wasn’t a mess.”*

Students who were more familiar with the program, were more enthusiastic about the home visits, because they knew what to expect. Further, students were excited about the program after they had a home visit. Some even expressed feeling sad at the end of the visit because they did not want their teacher to leave.

*“It was okay because I was happy to see my teacher.”*

*“[At the end of the visit, I was] sad, I didn’t want them to leave.”*

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## STRATEGIES FOR INITIAL COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

When initiating and scheduling visits, understanding that students and families might not fully understand the purpose is important. Staff might consider those initial communication with families so that families do not feel uneasiness or even defensiveness about being asked to receive a home visit. Staff often have strategies that already work well for them, but several staff focused groups revealed that one successful strategy is for that initial communication to have a positive approach. As PTHV veteran staff discuss:

*“I’ve never had someone say “oh no, we don’t want to talk to you” because we approach them like “oh your son is fabulous! We need to get to know you better!”*

*“There is a lot when you work that morning duty and you say “oh my God your son is amazing I’ve been wanting to talk to you to set up a home visit, and they are like, “sure!” Easy in.”*

*“The initial call it's so easy: ‘I'm their teacher we've had a great first two weeks; awesome to have your kid here and we have a program called home visits and we would just love to be part of your neighborhood if you want to walk around,... the latest I've had us walk around the neighborhood to get some exercise as well,’ and the parents love it the kids love it.”*

Staff can incorporate this information into specific strategies for reaching out to families. The most common strategy that staff discussed in all five focus groups was distributing handouts about the program for students to bring home to their families. This can be an effective strategy in addition to the phone call to explain to families what parent teacher home visits are about so that families might be more open to participating. Staff members in three focus groups discussed how once a positive foundation has been established, the program begins to sell itself by spreading through parents, siblings, and other family members. As some teachers add:

*“Parents also talk, so when you start doing them, they start talking – ‘Oh we had [the teacher] come over! And oh we had...” and they all talk about it and pretty soon you get the parent that was hesitant is like “so, can you come this time?”*

*“It's all through the mouth, people talk to each other. I have parents that are friends with parents here and if one parent does it the other hops on and wants to do it too, because they've heard that its really fun or they want to know more.”*

*“Once you got one kid or two kids that had the visit with you, then in class I'd say ‘hey, wanna tell them about the visit we had?’ And I'll let the kids spread the idea that [the teacher] was at my house, and it was actually really cool and then other kids are like, oh! I want to do that! So it was easy from there once you got the first couple of people to be spokesperson on how fabulous this is, and they don't want to feel left out.”*

Finally, staff use school events, or any time that families were on the school site, to ask families to participate. This could be a back-to-school night, student conference, sports event, and even talking to parents in the morning drop-off line. Common ways staff successfully engage families is describes in table 2.



**Table 2. Strategies for communicating and reaching out to families.**

Strategy	Number of times cited in focus groups
Handouts	5
Allow the program to sell itself	3
Take a positive approach	2
School Events	2

#### RELATIONSHIP FOCUS

The last core practice, the focus on the first visit of relationship building and discussing hopes and dreams, does seem to be followed at least in the focus groups of the student and staff included in this study. This is evident in the student focus groups as students do not report the teachers talked about grades on visits, and staff also noted that they sometimes had to remind some parents that they were not there to talk about academics.

*“We talked about what I want to be when I grow up.” - Student*

*I think like it’s two things either like “oh we want to show you everything” and introduce you to the whole family, and it’s like you have parents who immediately want to know “how are they doing in class, what are they like in class?” So during the first visit I know you’re not really supposed to talk academics, it’s not a conference. And you have to try to move them past that” - Staff*

#### Implementation Key Findings: 5 Core Practices

- WCSD generally follows all 5 cores practices
- Few staff select students truly at random, but also do not report necessarily targeting based on risk-level
- If unfamiliar with the program, students and families can feel hesitant, even defensive, when first learning about home visits
- Initial communication that involves positive things to say about the student can help increase buy-in, while keeping the program voluntary
- Relationship building, and not grades, is indeed a primary focus of home visits

## SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

We explored two primary research questions around short-term outcomes: to what extent does conducting home visit shift staff mindsets? And to what extent do home visits build positive connections and promote strong relationships between families and schools? Further, do these relationships serve as a protective factor for both students and staff during COVID? These research questions were both explored in the student and staff focus groups.

### RESEARCH QUESTION 4: STAFF MINDSETS

When staff attend PTHV training, part of the training involves learning about and recognizing potential implicit biases that everyone can have. While everyone can hold implicit biases, it is important to work to shift those biases so we do not make automatic assumptions about students and families that are not necessarily true. Home visits could potentially be an avenue to shift mindsets and reduce implicit biases among staff. During the staff focus groups, researchers asked questions such as “tell us something that happened on a visit that surprised you, what happened and why did it surprise you?”, “tell us how home visits have impacted you in the teaching profession or has helped you have a different perspective.” Several teachers from Title I schools did comment about home visits did open their eyes to how some of their students who live in poverty lived.

*“The previous school I worked at, I don’t know if they do home visits now, it was just a different socio-economic neighborhood and so...changing to this school, was very different for me. It was pretty eye-opening. And I chose to do that, I wanted to do that. But I think in that regard, especially at first, it was very different for me.”*

*“So many of them do live in poverty, and there’s a lot of people in the home, or it’s a very small space, it just opens my eyes to see how other people live.”*

*“You have some great experiences and you get an idea of some concerns that maybe you never thought of, it’s kinda eye-opening the struggle families are having.”*

Some staff discussed more broadly how the home visits have helped them be more understanding in general. They took the position as a parent themselves, but also recognized that every situation is different:

*“As a parent I’m like how can you not have time? But you know, everybody’s different so you do get to be more sensitive about everybody’s situation.”*

Although several staff commented on how home visits did open their eyes to different circumstances, it was not necessarily a primary theme in the focus groups. Talking about potential biases can be a challenging topic, especially in front of your peers and a focus group

facilitator. In fact, when staff were asked to describe something about a visit that surprised them and why, staff were more inclined to discuss instances when a family had shared and cooked a meal with them. Staff were quick to talk about the relationships they built and the positive experiences they had, discussed next.

#### RESEARCH QUESTION 5: RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

The primary purpose of PTHV is to build relationships among students and families. This is evident in some of their five core practices that visits are voluntary for all, all students have an opportunity to receive a visit (no targeting), and the focus of the first visit is on hopes and dreams, rather than academics and behavior. As such, the fifth research question is to what extent do home visits build positive connections and promote strong relationships between families and schools? And further, do these visits and relationships serve as a protective factor for both students and teachers during COVID?

Both students and staff described giving and getting tours of homes and talking about common interests such as sports or hobbies:

*“My teachers are into different sports and my family likes sports so we got to talk about that. Raiders are the best.” – Student*

*“I was happy that we were enjoying it together, and I was happy to show them stuff [in my house].” - Student*

*“I had an entire home video visit where I just talk about Marvel movies, like it’s what we talked about for an hour. He just went on and on, he was like “what do you think about like Thor though?” And we, that’s what we talked about. That’s what he was interested in, so I went with it.” -Staff*

*“And even when you meet the pets and you know their names and like you ask about you know their dog later and they’re like “oh she remembered!” They really feel like it’s a special thing that you remembered the little details.” – Staff*

Several sub-themes emerged related to the importance of relationship-building that result from home visits. Table 3 displays the themes that emerged and includes an example quote from that theme.

Table 3. Relationship Building Themes.

Theme	Example Quote
<b>Home visits provide additional resources at school for students</b>	“Once we have built that relationship with the kiddo and the family, then when the kids are at school they have that extra resource, that extra person that they know to go to. So if they are having a hard day or they need help with any other subject, or they just need to talk to somebody for 5 minutes.”
<b>The genuine excitement of students after the visits</b>	“A lot of them are more excited about coming to school and talking to their friends about the home visit and what happened. And “oh my gosh I’m so happy you came to my house!””
<b>Lasting connections are made</b>	“As they go on, a lot of students come back, and I’ve only been here for 4 years and they are reminded of when they came and visited. That relationship is still there.”
<b>The perception that parents become more open to working with the school and their child’s teachers</b>	“There is more open communication because they know more about us, they’ve been able to talk to us, they know we are interested in helping them for whatever they need to support their kid.”
<b>Build bridges between schools and families</b>	<p>“Sometimes you pinch yourself and you think wow this is really happening I’ve really got this parent on board”</p> <p>“They will dojo more frequently. Or they send their child in and the child will say “my mom had a question about such and such.” And then we can get back to the mom, like they’ll pass communication back and forth. More readily and fearlessly, they’re not in trouble.”</p> <p>“It’s so much easier to contact them after that, like they’re now finally on class dojo or they’ll actually pick up the phone if you call, like they’re more responsive to you and they wanna be more involved, so that helps too.”</p>
<b>Connecting families to resources in the community / Building community</b>	“I tell [people] that that’s where she can get her power bill paid. If you know that your neighbor or yourself needs groceries, know that we have a food pantry, share this information with your neighbors. For us, our school is about community, and we want you to know everything that is offered in our building, whether that be Boys and Girls Club, whether that be tutoring, or groceries, or the mobile harvest. If your student needs socks – whatever you need please feel free to call us. Even if it’s not you, tell your neighbor it’s okay to call.”
<b>Important Resource for Non-English Speaking Families</b>	“I liked that they were able to speak Spanish. I like that they didn’t talk about grades.” - Student

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## COVID AND BRIDGE VISITS

The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruptions to everyone’s lives and has had a large impact on many students and families. Not only was education disrupted, but the everyday

relationships that students had in school was disrupted as well. The isolation of the pandemic made it that much more important to have home visits. Students did not generally have any comments about how home visits affected them in terms of needing connection during the pandemic. However, many staff expressed how vital the visits were especially at the beginning of the pandemic.

*“COVID made it just that much harder, and that much more needed for schools to do home visits, to make those connections, build the relationships and make sure they have somebody they can call when they need.”*

*“It was an outlet to communicate and have fun where otherwise maybe families didn’t go out because they’re scared and the kids are not allowed to go outside and they’re not allowed to play with their neighbors and all that so to be able to do a zoom visit, it gave them socially something to do besides being on their phone.”*

*“I think them all being virtual, people were tired of being isolated, tired of being in their homes, they probably just enjoyed having that connection even if it was online. It helped them...social emotional well-being in order to have those things. I think this time, even though it did get worse, and life wasn’t quite as shut down, I don’t know that it made that much of an impact in at least what I saw.”*

While students did not have a lot to say specifically about how the visits helped them during the pandemic, they did have perspectives on whether they preferred having an in-person or Bridge visit. The student focus groups had a mix of students who received a Bridge vs. a home visit, and so we were able to ask them their perspectives on each. One student indicated they preferred the Bridge visit:

*“I liked it on the computer because I thought it would have been more weird to have my teacher come over, because your teacher would be coming to your home, and I don’t want to clean.”*

The quote above might also highlight some of the uneasiness families experience when they first learn about home visits. As such, Bridge visits might be a great alternative for families who are unfamiliar with the program. Other students who had a Bridge visit commented that they would like to have an in-person visit the next time, and even admitted they did not know they would have even have been interested in a home visit:

*“I never thought I would say this, but I prefer a home visit.”*

*“Next time I would rather have them come to my house.”*

Students who received a home visit (or who received a Bridge visit but would have preferred a home visit) commented on the value of having that in-person connection. This included having siblings who were too young to understand what was happening on the computer, not being able to share food, possible technology issues, and not being able to do an activity together:

*“I would have liked it not on the computer because my little brother didn’t know what was going on. [He is 5]”*

*“I prefer a home visit because sometimes on the computer something goes wrong and we disconnect and can’t get back on.”*

*“We got to show my teacher my house and make her tea so we could not do that on the computer.”*

*“[The computer is] not helpful because they couldn’t help us with the [organization activity] and stuff if we were on the computer.”*

Staff shared similar sentiments regarding in-person vs. Bridge visits. Staff appreciated the option to have bridge visits especially in instances when both students or other staff were hesitant to have an in-person visit. They also commented that Bridge visits were great in cutting down on travel time. Staff shared a story of being able to give extended family members tours of the school while on a virtual visit, which families greatly appreciated. However, in four out of the five focus groups, staff expressed that they prefer the in-person home visits. Many added that the in-person visit is a great way to get to know a family and you do not necessarily get the same experience on a virtual visit.

Bridge Visits	In-Person Visits
Help engage families that might be hesitant	Hard to replace in-person visits
Help engage staff who might be hesitant	Visits feel more personal
Can be very meaningful	Easier to get to know the family
Allows visits to continue if people are sick, staff do not have to travel	Easier to participate in hands-on activities like sharing a meal

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## PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

The relationship-building that occurs on home visits can also have practical implications for when students and staff return to the classroom. A few students shared thoughts about how they felt after the visit, although there was not an overwhelming finding from the student focus

groups that motivation or school engagement changed after the visit. One student commented that they appreciated the discussion about middle school:

*“We were talking about middle school and I was more excited about middle school after the visit since we talked about it.”*

Staff were more inclined to talk about the effects the visits had on students when everyone returned to the classroom. The primary themes are described below.

**Table 4. Practice Implication: Findings from Staff Focus Groups.**

Theme	Example Quote
<b>Students open up, mindset shift among students</b>	“Even the shy ones, they open up to you “can you help me? math is hard for me so now,” instead of not saying anything or responding with a horrible behavior”
<b>Behavior sometimes improves</b>	“Because of the home visits...behaviors change and improve.”
<b>Behavior sometimes does not improve, but it is easier to manage</b>	“Even though the phone call is something negative, the outcome is positive because the trust they have in you, they know for sure that you truly care and the connection is totally different.”
<b>Staff raise expectations</b>	“If anything I think my standards go even higher for the kids because you know, the parents, they're go getters and I know that their parents have high standards, so I try to adjust based on what partly what the parents' expectation is too, so that I can support the parents.”
<b>Helps with school transitions</b>	“When they meet [a teacher in the next grade level], they just seem to be a little more relaxed, and they are like “oh, this is what is happening for next year”
<b>Increased understanding</b>	“I’m more empathetic, definitely more just understanding, not lowering expectations, but fine tuning those expectations on the kids”

### Short-Term Outcomes: Key Findings

- Home visits might relate to a small shift in staff mindsets related to implicit bias
- Both students and staff share stories of relationship building during home visits. Even students who were unsure about the home visit at first share how important the visit is
- Staff (but not necessarily students) expressed how important home visits were during covid
- Bridge visits can offer a meaningful alternative to in-person visits, but in-person visits are more personal; both students and staff describe the benefits of in-person connections

### LONG-TERM OUTCOMES – STUDENT LEVEL OUTCOMES

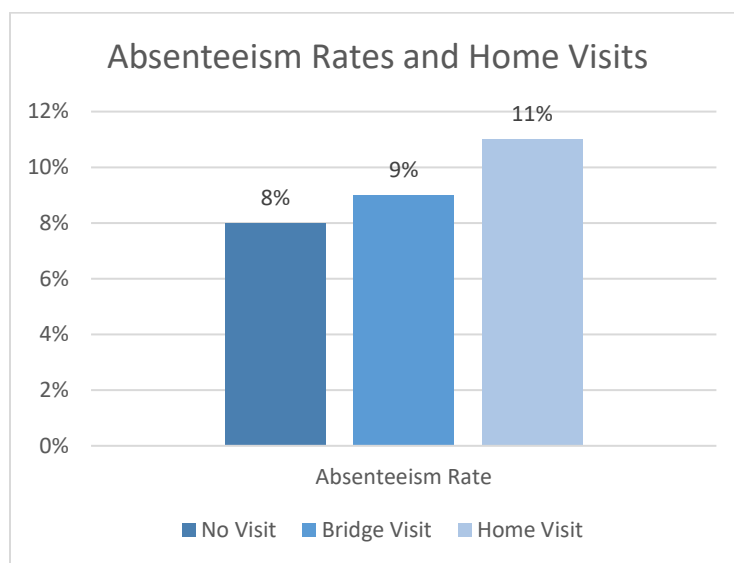
As with past evaluations, we examined how PTHV relates to student attendance. To examine the relationship between PTHV and attendance, we compared students who received at least one home visit to students at the same schools who did not receive a home visit. In other words, only students at schools that had the PTHV program during the 2021-2022 school year were included. A student cannot be counted twice in analyses (this violates the statistical assumption of independence), as such, if a student changed schools during the 2021-2022 school year, we selected the school in which they were enrolled for the longest period of time. For instance, if a student was enrolled in School A from August to February, and then enrolled in School B from March to June, their attendance and academic records only from School A was counted and they were not counted as being a student at School B.

Based on that process, there were 925 students who received a home visit that were included in the analysis (462 received a Bridge visit and 463 received a home or in-person visit), and 10,723 who did not receive a visit at those same schools. A general rule of thumb when comparing groups is to have at least 10% of the sample represented in each group. In order to make the groups more balanced, we randomly divided the comparison group into four smaller groups so that only 2,612 students were included in the analysis.



## ATTENDANCE

Figure 2 displays the average absenteeism rate by visit type in the selected sample. Students who received no visit had the lowest absenteeism rate at 8%, followed by Bridge visit at 9%, and students who received a home or in-person visit had the highest absenteeism rate at 11%.



**Figure 2. Absenteeism Rates by Home Visits in the 2021-2022 SY.**

To better examine the relationships between PTHV and absenteeism, we conducted a multi-level modeling analysis. Multi-level modeling accounts for both individual and school-level differences. Further, we controlled for other variables that we know can relate to absenteeism other than the parent teacher home visits. More specifically we controlled for, FRL status, grade, EL status, and risk (excluding the attendance risk indicator). Further, because home visits can also affect students at the school-level, we also included a variable that measures the percentage of students who received a home visit at that school.

The first model revealed that students who received a home visit had significantly higher absenteeism rates ( $B = 0.022$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ ,  $p = 0.07$ ) than students who did not receive a home visit. There was no difference in absenteeism rates between students who received a Bridge visit and those who did not receive a visit ( $p > 0.1$ ). As such, this does suggest that absenteeism was higher among students who received a home visit. This is contrary to national studies and previous evaluations that have found that home visits are related to a reduction in absenteeism (Sheldon & Jung, 2018). Further, a full evaluation was not conducted for the 2020-2021 school year, but attendance data did indicate that students who did not receive a visit in the 2020-2021 school year had an average absenteeism rate of 13% and students who did receive a visit had an average absenteeism rate of 11%, a statistically significant difference. In other words,

the data from the previous school year suggested visits had a positive relationship with attendance.

Although PTHV is designed to reach a cross-section of students and not just high-risk students, we decided to explore how controlling for prior year risk affected these results. This does significantly reduce the sample size as many students do not have a prior year risk category. We were able to run analyses for 226 students who received a home visit, 315 who received a Bridge visit, and 1,750 students who did not receive a visit. **When prior year risk was included the model, there was no longer a negative effect between home visits and attendance.**

There could be several reasons why absenteeism might have been higher for students who received a home visit. During the Spring semester of the 2021-2022 school year, transportation was suspended for one out of five weeks for every school in the district. As such, absenteeism increased at those schools as some students did not have a way to get to school. This is completely out of the control of any program, including Parent Teacher Home Visits. Additionally, although staff should not target specific students for visits (e.g., high risk students), it is possible that some staff might have decided to visit a family because the student already had higher absenteeism rates. As such, the higher absenteeism of those students might not be because they received a visit, but the reason why they were selected for a visit. We are not able to examine attendance before and after a visit, but we did examine prior year risk (including attendance), and found that the negative effect between home visits and attendance was no longer significant, providing some evidence that there might have been some targeting for visits.

## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES AND CLIMATE

Each year, students in grades 5-12 take a school climate survey in the fall. The climate survey has 75 questions that measure both students' social emotional competencies (SECs) and perceptions of school climate. Although we could not examine how home visits might relate to SECs and climate for younger students, we did examine the relationship for 5<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders who received at least one home visit. As with attendance, we randomly selected 25% of the sample for the comparison group. This resulted in 1,091 students who did not receive a visit, 236 students who received a Bridge visit, and 125 students who received a home visit and took the climate survey. A summary of results can be found in Table 5. It is important to note that these relationships are correlational, and do not necessarily mean home visits directly caused an increase or decrease in a specific social emotional competency or climate measure.

**Table 5. Social Emotional Competencies and School Climate Findings.**

Climate Scale	Home Visit	Bridge Visit
<b>Self-Awareness of Self-Concept</b>	+	
<b>Self-Awareness of Emotions</b>		
<b>Social Awareness</b>	+	-
<b>Self-Management of Emotions</b>		
<b>Self-Management of Goals</b>	+	
<b>Self-Management of Schoolwork</b>	+	
<b>Relationship Skills</b>		
<b>Responsible Decision-Making</b>	+	
<b>Engagement</b>	+	
<b>Adult Support</b>	+	
<b>Adult Respect</b>		

*Note.* A “+” indicates a statistically significant positive relationship, a “-” indicates a statistically significant negative relationship, and a blank cell indicates there is no relationship between the visit type of the SEC/climate item.

The results indicate that students who received a home visit (but not a Bridge visit) rated themselves higher on self-awareness of self-concept, social awareness, self-management of goals and schoolwork, responsible decision-making, engagement, and adult support. There was no relationship between visits and self-awareness of emotions, self-management of emotions, and adult respect. Interestingly, there was a negative relationship between Bridge visits and social awareness skills. Increased engagement and adult support show a potential link between home visits and the types of supports discussed in the focus group. Both students and staff discussed the importance of having home visits to increase supports students have at school, and staff discussed how they do sometimes see a shift in motivation in students after the visit.

### Long-Term Outcomes: Key Findings

- **No relationship between attendance and home visits**
- **Positive relationship between home visits (but not Bridge visits) and social emotional competencies and school climate**

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Results from both the implementation and outcome evaluation indicate there are several successes from the Parent Teacher Home Visit Program during the 2021-2022 school year. Both students and staff expressed the importance of home visits and while there is a lot of value in Bridge visits, and Bridge visits can be a great option for families and staff who are new to the program, it can be hard to replace that in-person connection that occurs on the home visits. The outcome evaluation results indicated no relationship between attendance and home visits, but there were some positive relationships between climate and SECs and home visit participation. Finally, many staff expressed how important this program is, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and are excited for the continuation of Parent Teacher Home Visits in Washoe County School District.

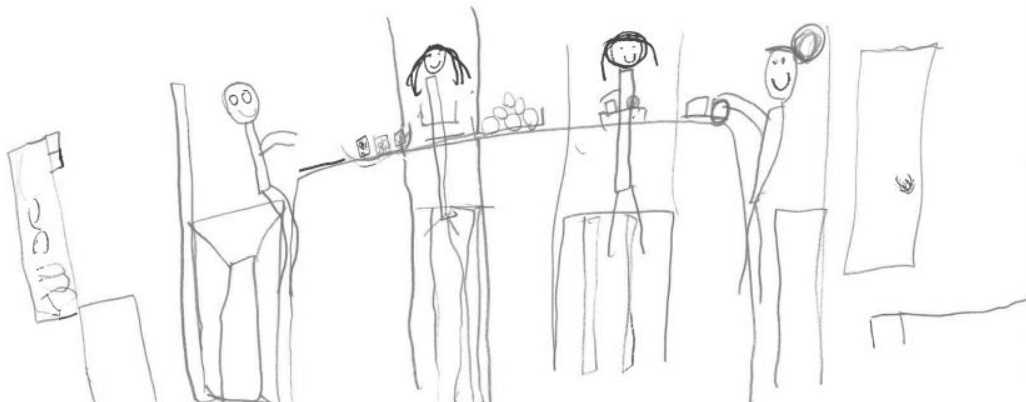
“Home visits are the best thing that could ever, ever happen to family systems.

“I think it’s a fantastic program, I hope it never goes away. I hope it continues and supports teachers and families so that we can keep doing this because there are so many important things that happen during that home visit that expands on everything that we do.”

## REFERENCES

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- Sheldon, S. B., & Jung, S. B. (2018). Student outcomes and parent teacher home visits. Johns Hopkins School of Education.

APPENDIX – STUDENT DRAWINGS OF HOME VISITS FROM FOCUS GROUPS





Me showing my cat to the teachers.