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Getting Families Involved in Students' Education through
Home Visits at Midwestern Charter Schools

by

Hakan Solak

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
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Getting Families Involved in Students' Education through
Home Visits at Midwestern Charter Schools

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University of Nebraska, 2010

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Home visits are a model of communication after school time when school staff members actually go into students homes to foster a relationship among students, families, and teachers. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how home visits take place in a single charter school and how families are involved in the educational process of students at Midwestern Charter Schools.

Thirteen participants from Chicago Math and Science Academia (CMSA) were interviewed via an open-ended questionnaire. Additionally, two home visit observations were made by the primary investigator in the natural setting of the homes of two students. Through this form of communication, home visits by teachers and other school staff, families who participated in the study indicated they were more involved in their children's educational process and teachers displayed their efforts to the parents about how much they care for the success of their children. As a result, home visits created a caring relationship between school and homes that increases the student engagement and student achievement.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Student engagement and achievement are becoming big issues in the 21st century's educational world. To increase progress in these two areas family involvement can be a very important ingredient (Hara & Burke, 1998; Lunenburg & Irby, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). According to the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (2010), families can serve as models for their children and support their children's education at home by developing a strategy which includes supervising their homework, monitoring TV watching and other after school activities, and controlling their bedtimes and school attendance. Teachers should also be guiding parents in parent-child activities such as interactive homework, skill practice, enrichment games, or other activities that support their children's educational progress.

In today's educational world, there are supposed to be more ways to connect with children and their activities either inside school activities or in outside settings. At this point, Worthy and Hoffman (2001) emphasized making personal contact with students outside of the school settings through home visitations with parent involvement because education extended far beyond classroom and school doors. Home visits can be considered as new ways of creating connections between home and school partnership and enhancing parent involvement in their children's education (Allen & Tracy, 2004; Gonzalez-DeHass, Holbein & Willems, 2005).

Meyer and Mann (2006) were concerned about the public education system in the United States in view of the increasing number of students who are not prepared to be successful. Therefore, they examined the benefit of home visitations related with the

kindergarten children's success from the teachers' perspectives. The researchers, in their descriptive study, found that home visits strengthen home school. In the teachers' perception, home visits create positive relationships with children and their families. "The teachers also believe that the visits lead to improved communication with the parents, better understanding of the child, and better understanding of the impact of the child's home environment as it relates to school performance" (Meyer & Mann, 2006).

Across the country many teachers and school administrators are attempting to increase the communication between parent, community and school by taking the initiative to visit the homes of their students (Stuht, 2009). They all have different strategies to increase student achievement and decrease dropout rate by attracting families to connect them with school institutions. In Sacramento City Schools, home visits motivated students to achieve more and misbehave less by involving parents in their children's education. As the Dallas (TX) district's graduation rate hovered at 62.5% (Fox, 2008), Dallas Independent School District Superintendent Michael Hinojosa and Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert worked on home visits directly. They started a Saturday 'door-knocking activity' to invite potential dropouts back to school by the district personnel. They kept schools open during the weekend for registration and parent meetings in order to tackle the dropout problem. From Colorado to North Carolina and Missouri to Chicago, many school districts were influenced by these efforts and required home visits; as were England, Australia and Japan in their school reform plans (Steele-Carlin, 2008).

Purpose Statement

The existing literature is largely based on family involvement and student achievement, but there is limited research on how to engage students outside of school (e.g., home visitation). For example, there are a lot of research studies that discuss understanding the relationship between parents, students, and teachers, but there is a need to explore ways about how to improve a relationship and observe students in their natural environments. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the role of home visits in students' academic process and how their families become involved in their children's education. At this stage of the research, home visits will be generally defined as school staffs' (teachers, school counselors, or administrators) visit at a students home with their parents as active participants in the visit. Home visits are intended to improve communication skills of public school and private agency teachers, novice teachers, and teacher candidates with students and families.

Research Questions

Specifically, the following questions guided this study:

1. What is the role of a home visit in family involvement?
2. How does a family become involved in their children's educational progress outside of school?
3. Why do school staff members make home visits?
4. What are the challenges when a school staff member makes home visits?
5. What are the students' opinions about their teachers' visit to their home?
6. How do families perceive their children's teachers visit to their home?

Definitions

Home Visits are defined as visits done by school staff (teachers, school counselors, or administrators) at students' home with their parents present. Teachers perceived home visits as a bridge to reach out parents and teach them how to do school activities at home. A home visit is also an informal opportunity for educators to engage with students to get to know them and their families well in their natural environment.

Charter School—Charter schools are semi-autonomous public schools established by a group of parents, teachers, administrators or a local community-based organization. They provide education for K12 (California Charter School Association, 2005).

Family Involvement—Even though parental involvement is used in many contexts, it is believed family involvement has a broader meaning that includes whoever has the responsibility of taking care of children such as mothers, fathers, grand-parents, siblings, uncles, aunts and non-custodial parents. There are different types of family involvement in children's education, for example, providing a quiet place, setting times for watching TV, appropriate communication, putting high-realistic expectations, encouraging children either physically or emotionally, and encouraging their educational development such as reading and writing skills.

Student Engagement—Student engagement is described as an indicator for students' learning and professional development; it describes the involvement of the student in his/her educational plan. (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006).

Student Achievement—This can be defined in three different categories such as:

1. Academic achievement: Having high level of knowledge and reading and writing skills that help achieving in school and life.

2. Essential life skills: Demonstrating knowledge of diverse culture and attitude responsible, fulfilling and respectful towards individual lives.
3. Responsibility to the community: Understanding common moral values and contributing to an effective and productive community (Fairfax County Public Schools, Virginia, n.d.).

Delimitations

The population for this study was restricted to Chicago Math and Science Academy (CMSA) administrators and teachers. It was a requirement for CMSA teachers to make home visits at least five times in every school year. Even though CMSA teachers were selected because they were perceived to be among the most experienced school staffs with home visits, this was the only school in the Chicago area where home visits were practiced and required.

Limitations

Although CMSA staffs were interviewed to gain their responses about their experiences with home visits, there is still a need to interview parents and students to understand and complete a more complete picture of home visits. The results of this study may not reflect all of the Midwestern Charter Schools teachers opinions because the sample was limited to the only CMSA school staffs in the Chicago area.

Significance of Study

The reason I chose home visits as a topic was because there were very few academic studies referring to teacher visitation to their students' homes and engaging in conversation in an informal way in the students' natural environment. Families and teachers often times have conflicts about students' progress at school because families

miss most of the steps of their children encounter while in school and teachers miss what students are doing at home. There are some schools practicing home visits in this sense across the states, therefore, I believe there is a need to explore the home visit idea. There is also another concern whether families involve in their children's education or not because many families are not aware of what to do when there is a problem about their kid at school. This study explored the issues teachers faced while engaged in home visits and provided ideas for other public and private school teachers, novice teachers, and other teachers who have not have an experience with home visits.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Home Visit

In 1997, Acosta and Keith provided their view on home visits and gave a sense of how a home visit should be conducted. They specified the role of home visits as a help for school staffs to get to know parents. A responsible teacher is in charge of making all of the calls and arranges the schedules to visit with the family, even during the weekend or vacation time. Teachers travel to the homes of families with some cookies or refreshments to share with parents. Their team members could be a male, a female, or a bilingual colleague who accompanies them during the visitation. When teachers visit a home they encourage parents to become involved in what school offers and work on specific needs of students, but they do not focus on students' grades. Teachers considered every family as important; therefore, they worked on every family individually. They visited each family once a year, and kept all the records for the future parent meetings.

The existing literature was based on family involvement and student achievement, but there was limited research on how to engage students outside of school (e.g., home visitation). Thus, Worthy and Hoffman (2001) emphasized making personal contact with students outside of the school settings through home visitations with parent involvement because education extended far beyond classroom and school doors. Teachers perceived home visits as a bridge to reach out to parents and teach them how to do school activities at home. A home visit is also an informal opportunity for educators to engage with students to get to know them and their families. Home visits can be considered as a new

way of creating connections between home and school partnership and enhance parent involvement in their children's educational process (Allen & Tracy, 2004; Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005).

In 2003, Reglin perceived there was much work to be done in the education of America's youth. He intended to discover the perceptions of high-risk families' and parent involvement in school activities through home visitations. That way they could determine who was the most productive school personnel to make home visits. They used 'Home Visit Survey' to analyze the effectiveness of the home visitations over 80 parents. Based on the results of home visit survey, the majority of parents (91.3%) indicated that home visits were very effective in enhancing their involvement in school activities and would help them, as parents, to support their children's education. Over 78% percent of the parents indicated their child's teacher would be effective as the person to make home visits, 43.8% of the parents indicated the school counselor might be effective, and 42.5 % of the parents answered the school principal would be an effective home visitor.

Meyer and Mann (2006) were concerned about the public education system in the United States, because of the increasing number of students who are not prepared to be successful. Therefore, they examined the benefit of home visitations related to the kindergarten children's success from the teachers' perspectives. Participants completed a survey after a home visit at the beginning of school and again prior to the end of the year. The researchers found that home visits strengthened home school partnerships. In the teachers' perception, home visits created positive relationships with children and their families. "The teachers also believed that the visits lead to improved communication

with the parents, better understanding of the child, and better understanding of the impact of the child's home environment as it related to school performance" (Meyer & Mann, 2006).

Finally, according to Stuht (2009), many teachers and school administrators were attempting to increase the communication between parent, community, and school by becoming more actively involved in the community. They all had different strategies to increase student achievement and decrease dropout rate by attracting families to connect them with school institutions. In Sacramento City Schools, home visits motivated students to achieve higher, misbehave lower, by involving parents in their children's education. As the Dallas district's graduation rate is 62.5% (Fox, 2008), Dallas Independent School District Superintendent Michael Hinojosa and Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert worked on home visits distinctly and they started a Saturday door-knocking activity to invite potential dropouts back to school by the District personnel. They kept schools open during the weekend for registration and parent meetings in order to tackle the dropout flow. From Colorado to North Carolina and Missouri to Chicago, many school districts were influenced by these efforts and required home visits, so did England, Australia and Japan in their school reform plans (Steele-Carlin, 2008).

Charter School

According to Center for Education Reform (CER, n.d.), the idea of charter schools has started as a need for students and families who were not satisfied with their schools since 1992. Today, across the United States, more than 5,000 charter schools are serving more than 1.5 million children. Charter school laws have been accepted by 39 states and the District of Columbia (CER, n.d.) as of 2010 fall semester. Charter schools

are innovative public schools run by educators, parents, civic leaders or organizations and attended by choice, free from most rules and regulations governing conventional public schools (CER, n.d.). Charter schools use a wider variety of innovative curricula, give more instructional time, attract more students than they can serve and still receive less money per student than non-charter public schools.

There are many research articles, power points and studies about the charter school movement starting from early 1990s. According to Bulkley and Fisler (2003) many of the early studies were funded by the organizations that had strong and positive views, but later studies funded by the U.S. Department of Education and journal articles that provided a more objective analysis on the charter school idea. In conclusion, students and parents are satisfied in charter schools and they feel they have more autonomy than public schools, but the jury is still out on the outcomes, innovation, equity and accountability. The idea of charter school is presented in Figure 1.

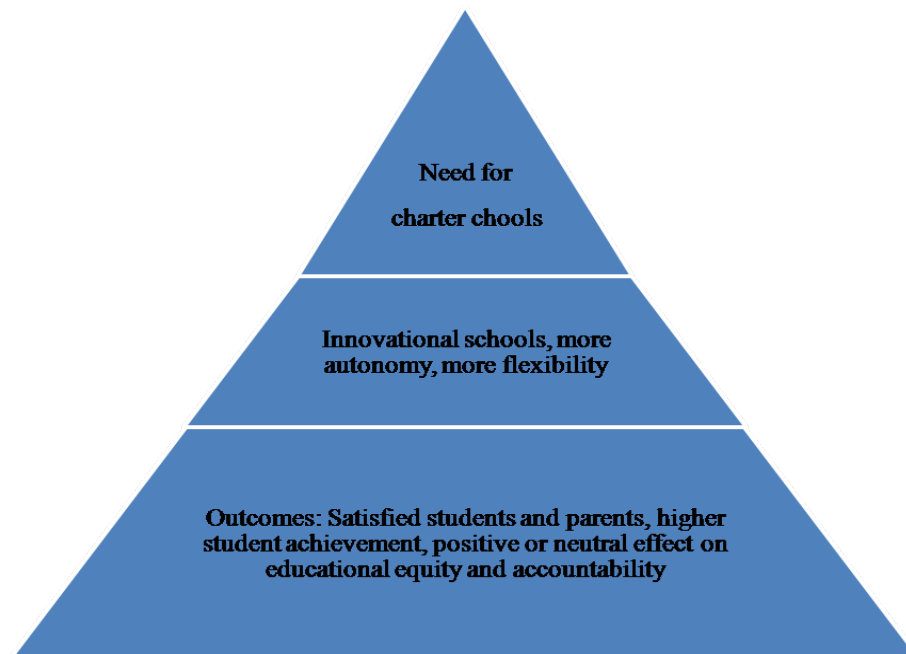


Figure 1. The idea of charter schools.

Charter schools also must obey public school regulations in terms of statewide testing and other accountabilities that might change state by state. Charter schools are allowed to remain open based on their performance accountability, unlike conventional public schools which can remain despite their low student achievement or inability to manage school. For example, charter schools, because of their contract, are closed down if they fail to perform lower on state required tests (CER, n.d.). This performance-based accountability system is working in the charter school concept according to the data on closed charter schools across the states (CER, n.d.).

Family Involvement

There is a body of research literature about parent involvement that supports student engagement in educational settings and activities. For example, Heynes (2007) questioned whether parental involvement could improve student achievement or not in his study. He defined parental involvement as parents' contributions in students' educational processes and experiences. He has meta-analyzed 52 research articles including many quantitative researches and found out that family involvement is significantly effecting secondary school student engagement in relation to student achievement.

Yet, Urdan, Solek & Schoenfelder (2007) indicated there was a deficiency in the literature in terms of the influences of parents on students' academic motivation. Therefore, the researchers asked if families had an effect on student motivation. They examined the students' perceptions about the nature and strength of familial influences on their academic motivation, as well. The researchers have found some reasons such as family influence patterns (family pleasing, family obligation, family support), aversive

influence, and lack of influence, comparison of high and low achievers, and critical incidents (academic and non-academic).

Korkmaz (2007) also brought a different point about the relationship between schools, parents, and teachers to enhance student achievement. He emphasized on parental respect, love and care about their children and participating in school activities to support them. Being responsible to students, having a good communication with them, and providing a positive learning environment for students are also considered as key ingredients to enhance student engagement and learning. In terms of the relationship between teachers, students, and families altogether, therefore, there must be a way of connection to produce higher levels of student achievement. At this point, Henderson and Mapp (District Administration, 2007) have synthesized 51 high-quality studies on parent and community involvement, and they figured out an important relationship between student achievement and parent involvement in community activities. They also addressed that their support for students' learning at home would increase student achievement.

Student Engagement

Student engagement, which can be defined as students' personal, active involvement in terms of their emotion or voice, is an important element in school settings to increase students' achievement. Furrer and Skinner (2003) identified student engagement, as being goal-directed, focused, intense, persistent, and interested. Students can be focused and motivated by their teachers in classroom and school activities, as Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, and Barch (2004) concluded that more supported students, more involved in classroom activities, and more succeeded. On the other hand, Zhao and

Kuh (2004) considered students as the members of the community where they focused on academic achievement and developed their identity through engaging in a social environment. They also pointed out that students' participation in a learning community effects student engagement.

Teachers and parents are the key elements in student engagement especially among African-American and Latino youth (Garcia-Reid, Reid, & Peterson, 2005). They suggest schools and teachers to work on parental interaction meticulously and stop obstructions that hold up parental involvement in their school activities. These barriers are generally known as distance between teachers and parents, lack of teacher training, and race and class barriers. Gordon and Louis (2009) emphasized that schools with a diverse leadership body are more open to the community and parental involvement.

Clark (1990) stated that students spent only their 30% of awaking time in school, so that teachers wonder what students are doing at home or out of school. In this sense, schools or teachers can get an idea about what students are doing and what kind of activities they are engaged with through home visit. This kind of communication might be helpful to understand the children' out of school lives and get them engaged behaviorally in some Midwestern charter schools.

Student Achievement

There are studies discussing school resources such as financial sources, class size, birth order effect student achievement (Hoxby, 2000; Krueger, 1999), but according to one of the Rose, Gallup, and Elam's (1997) public opinion polls 86% of families believe parental involvement is an indispensable key for student achievement. When students engage both behaviorally and academically, schools and teachers can motivate them

easily in achievement process. In a quote Ellefsen and Beran (2007) explain these two key factors together, “Student learning and behavior problems are directly related to achievement, whereas family factors are distal correlates of achievement. Results suggest that school psychologists need to consider several factors that relate to achievement.”

Houtenville and Conway (2008) indicated parental involvement strongly and positively effects student achievement. Conway said

Parental effort is consistently associated with higher levels of achievement, and the magnitude of the effect of parental effort is substantial. We found that schools would need to increase per-pupil spending by more than \$1,000 in order to achieve the same results that are gained with parental involvement.

Finally, creating caring relationships through after school activities with students might support them engage in school and improve student achievement. In order to increase student achievement, school administrators and teachers can try to foster student engagement in their classrooms or communities. Here is one of the main questions of this study, as monitoring students’ academic process throughout the school year increases student engagement and achievement, can teachers and school staff members’ visits at students’ homes support students academic process?

Chapter Three

Methodology

Qualitative Approaches in Case Studies

Creswell (2008) described the role of the qualitative researcher as opening an inquiry to understand the complexity of a situation; among all these complex structures the researcher has one central component or a single phenomenon throughout the research. To explore the phenomenon the researcher asks open-ended questions about the central component. Therefore the researcher considers the participants' point of views to make decisions, and then analyzes the words, observations, voices and images of the participants. Finally, the researcher writes down the reports by emphasizing on individual meaning, context and self-reflexivity. Creswell (2008) and Yin (2008) explain simple steps about how to conduct case studies in their books:

- The focus of a case study is a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context.
- The purpose of a case study is to develop a deep understanding of the case to provide insights about issues.
- The participants can be an event, program, activity, or individuals bounded by time or place.
- Usually multiple types of data including interviews, observations, and documents are collected.
- The analyzing methods are open coding and theme development.
- For findings researchers provide an in-depth description of the case including themes, cross-case themes, and lessons learned.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the role of home visits in a students' academic process and how their families became involved in their children's education. Home visits are generally defined as the school staffs (teachers, school counselors, or administrators) visit the students at their homes with their parents. Home visits are intended to improve communication skills of public school and private agency teachers, novice teachers, and teacher candidates with students and families.

Setting

A paradigm or worldview is defined as a basic set of beliefs and assumptions that guide our inquiries (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). As a researcher, I was inspired by my past experiences because I had made over a hundred of home visits during my three years of teaching career, therefore, I decided to explore the home visit idea. I first looked for a school where they have been practicing the home visit and I found just one charter school, Chicago Math & Science Academy (CMSA), which had the home visit in their program as a requirement from the school administration. I contacted the school principal if they would participate in my study and sent them a letterhead for asking their permission to involve in this project. This Chicago Math & Science Academy charter school was the only school practicing home visit, with school staff actually going to students homes in the Chicago area among public and other charter schools. Therefore, this study became a case study as the central component is home visit.

Subjects

Population. Chicago Math and Science Academy (CMSA) provides educational services for Northern Chicago. Currently, they offer 6 to 12 grade-level education to

about 475 students. They have a culturally diverse population that is about 58% Hispanic/Latino, 25% African-American, 12% Asian, and 5% White. They also operate with over 40 teachers to take care of students' educational needs. They started running CMSA as public charter school in 2004 and since then they gave their first graduates in 2009 with a 100% graduate and college admission rate. They offer a variety of different after school activities and home visit is one of their required activities from the school staffs. They believe home visit activity has a critical role on their success, therefore, they require every teacher to make at least 5 home visits in every school year.

Sample. The sample was chosen purposefully among the ones who had enough experiences with the home visits. Even though, the school itself required their teachers to make at least 5 home visits every school year, there were some groups who did not have enough knowledge about home visits to make interviews; therefore, with the help of the school counselor, I was able to find 13 experienced school staffs who got interested in this study. Two of the teachers also accepted to be observed in a natural setting of home visits. The approximate range of home visits per school year is from 6 visits to 50 visits. More information about the participants will be presented in chapter four, the population and background section.

Data Collection Procedures

To conduct this research as the primary investigator (PI), I applied to grant permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. After the project's approval (see Appendix A), I asked the principal of Chicago Math & Science Academy to make interviews with their teachers and counselors in the school. The principal of CMSA provided me a letterhead that was basically saying the project

could take a place in their school (see Appendix B). The school principal directed me to one of the college counselors to arrange the participants and places for interviews. Since the school required every teacher to make at least five home visits during a school year, our job was easier to find participants among the school staff. Thus the college counselor announced this study in the school to over 40 teachers during April in the last spring semester. Thirteen teachers, who had enough experiences with home visits, were chosen purposefully to gain a deep insight of the home visit idea in the coming month and requested to make interviews in the school and observations during their visits. Before the interviews took place, I gave every teacher a consent letter that informed their rights for being in this study (see Appendix C); they signed the letter and returned to me. The participants were asked seven open-ended questions. Eleven participants were interviewed face-to-face in their convenient time and place. The interviews were recorded by a digital voice recorder. Two participants were interviewed via e-mail method and they returned their written answers in two different word documents. Additionally, I involved in two home visits with the teams and made observations during their visits and took notes about the visit process from the beginning to the end.

Research Questions

During this study I sought answers for the following research questions:

1. What is the role of a home visit in family involvement?
2. How does a family become involved in their children's educational progress outside of school?
3. Why do school staff members make home visits?
4. What are the challenges when a school staff makes home visits?

5. What are the students' opinions about their teachers' visit to their home?
6. How do families perceive their children's teachers visit to their home?

Interview Questions

I used the following questions to guide interviews with the teacher participants,

1. Can you please tell me about yourself and experiences with home visits?
2. How do you prepare yourself for a home visit?
3. What are your goals with home visits and what you do during a regular home visit?
4. What are the families' perceptions about your visits?
5. What about the students' perception about your visit?
6. How do you implicate the results of the home visits?
7. How does a home visit impact the students' academic progress?

Data Analysis Procedures

I used the NVivo 8 qualitative research software that provided a more sophisticated work space in the program to analyze all of my data together. NVivo 8 is the most reliable program to analyze qualitative data such as videos, interview recordings, documents, photos and audio files. I downloaded the digital voice records to my computer and put e-mail interviews and observation notes in a word document.

Instead of transcribing voice records, NVivo 8 qualitative data analysis program allowed me to code the interview results right after listening to the voice records. After finishing the coding process, I created over 50 free nodes in the program that later on became 19 major tree nodes. Then after exporting these tree nodes from the program to my computer in text files, I included all exported data in a different word document

together. Finally, I emerged these 19 tree nodes in 6 major themes that are presented in the Chapter Four.

Chapter Four

Results and Findings

Participant Population and Their Experiences with Home Visits

Thirteen school teachers participated in this study. Eleven teachers were interviewed face-to-face and two teachers were interviewed via email method. Among these participants, a science teacher and a college counselor allowed me to make observations during their visits. They started doing home visit practices since the first day of the school opening and required every teacher to make 5 home visits annually in their contracts between the teachers and the school. Figure 2 shows the participants' teaching and home visit experiences in Chicago Math & Science Academy (CMSA).

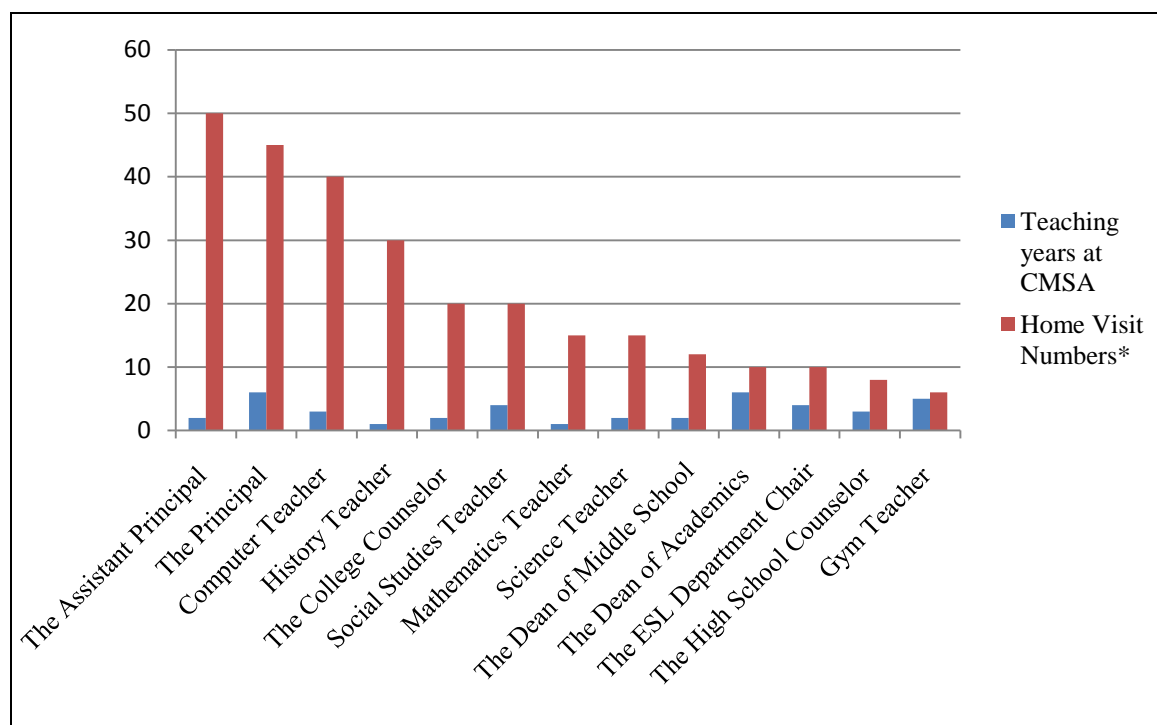


Figure 2. Participants' background in teaching and home visits.

As it can be seen in Figure 2, the assistant principal, who had the highest number of visits in one school year, made approximately 50 home visits during his two years of teaching experiences in CMSA. Next, the school principal, who was one of the founding members of CMSA, made about 45 home visits in one school year. The school principal had also been a part of the school administration since 2004. Next, the computer teacher finished about 40 home visits in one school year¹ in his third year of teaching at CMSA. After that, the history teacher teaching seventh grade American history and ninth grade world history completed 30 home visits in his first year of teaching at CMSA. Then, the college counselor dealing with juniors and seniors for their college application process and admissions made average 20 home visits in his second year at CMSA. He also went to home visits with other colleagues' teams in the previous year. Following the middle school social studies teacher has done 20 home visits in her fourth year of teaching at CMSA. A newly hired mathematics teacher and a two-year experienced science teacher accomplished 15 home visits in one year at CMSA. Then, the dean of the middle school and an English teacher made average 12 home visits during his second year at CMSA. Following him is the dean of academics and founding member of CMSA made average 10 home visits every year during his sixth year. He also trains novice teachers how to make home visits appropriately. Next, the head of ESL department teaching English as a second language services to students who are not proficient yet, finding out where students come from and what level of English they speak completed 10 visits annually during her fourth year at CMSA. The high school counselor made about 8 home visits annually during her third year at CMSA. She mainly provides supportive services for

* Average home visits in one school year.

students and talks with students when they have problems about grades or home, and also she helps students connect with the outside services. Last, the gym teacher also practiced home visits annually 6 times during his fifth year at CMSA.

Findings

After creating over 50 nodes from the data of voice records, word files, and observations, I merged 6 major themes. They are:

- I. Goals of home visits,
- II. Planning and preparation for home visits,
 - Target groups,
 - Planning,
 - Preparations.
- III. Home atmosphere and visiting process,
- IV. Perception of families and students
 - Family perception
 - Student perception
- V. Impacts of home visits,
 - Opportunities,
 - Benefits,
 - Academic Progress
- VI. Surprising cases and suggestions by teachers

Goals of Home Visits

The school administration explains why they require at least five home visits from every teacher and put that as a rule in their contracts with the teachers. They value the

family involvement in their children's education and believe they cannot succeed by themselves alone if the parents are not on the board. As a school, they also want to keep a strong relationship with their families and look for ways how they can cooperate to make students more successful. Their main goals of home visits can be generally summarized as follows:

1. making sure parents are aware of what CMSA offers; talking about the school and programs that is available for students and parents in a general sense;
2. increasing family involvement in student's education because parents do not see every step of their children what they learn at school;
3. creating an informal way of approaching to families and giving families continues feedback how their students are doing academically and behaviorally in the school;
4. strengthening the connection with students and families; it is not an intention to get students in trouble, it is just forming a communication;
5. let parents know that they care for their children and let them know they are there for them; and
6. showing parents that the doors of the school is open to them at anytime, when they seek of the school's help, without any barrier they can make it.

Specifically, the college counselor mentioned about that they always appreciated family involvement in students' education, and they believe it has a big impact on their success. He aims to convince parents to support their children for post graduation. For example, among the parents that he visited just one parent had a college degree which he believes it is more difficult to change the parents' mind because most of the families feel

their children will go to work right after they graduate from the high school. Therefore, they do not even think about the college education, so the college counselor tells them about the job opportunities with a college degree to increase the college acceptances with the parents support. The history teacher aims to let parents know about the after school programs such as tutoring or field trips. The dean of middle school wants to make sure parents understand that CMSA is there to help their children to succeed, they are not just a place where parents send the children for six hours and then come home, and they also want to know what children are doing at home. On the other hand, while the computer teacher appreciates the home visits as just socializing and chatting with parents about the children at their home, the high school counselor usually makes her home visits on a purpose, she likes to make a connection with the family what is going on, but she prefers to have a reason to go rather than just to visit because she feels more comfortable when there is something to talk about, therefore, she tends to go out if there is a concern.

Planning and Preparation for Home Visits

Target groups. As a school that practices home visits as part of their professional model, CMSA focused on different groups every year. For instance, they started home visits in their first years by focusing on the parents who stopped sending their children to the school next year or did not attend the parent-teacher conferences at all. Since they are running a charter school, which gets funded by the number of their students, they worked on their retention rates during their first years as well. Therefore, the principal's priority was to increase the retention rate among 8th graders because most of the 8th grades did not know what is offered to them in high school, then they chose to go to a different high school with their limited information about their current school.

This year, 2009, the assistant principal and the college counselor aimed the juniors and seniors to visit and inform their families about the college application process. Because most of their families are not college graduates, they are not aware of what it takes to send their children to college and what procedure they need to follow, so they intend to educate families about the college application process at their convenient place, at their home. The school also targeted the ESL and special education students this year, because they believe these students feel isolated from the school since they do not speak English. Among these target groups some teachers prefer to visit known students while some others prefer unknown or new students and some just pick a different student every year. In contrast, the high school counselor specifically targets the students who she is worried about because sometimes parents are busy, work a lot, or they do not go to school for a parent-teacher conference.

Planning. When educators decided to make visits to students' homes, they contacted families in the following ways:

- asking students for home visits,
- sending parents a letter,
- passing a note between students and parents,
- making phone calls, and
- sending parents e-mails.

According to the computer teacher, scheduling was difficult sometimes because some parents did not want teachers to come to their homes, but for the high school counselor - - she called parents on the phone and she usually gave parents options whether they wanted the teacher to come to their home or come into school or meeting at a coffee shop,

because she wanted to know what was comfortable for parents. Also, the Dean of academics said they did not visit if parents did not want to be visited. However, the middle school social studies teacher stated, “When middle school students hear about home visits, they want to be selected for it.” On the other hand, the history teacher never scheduled visits with students, he contacts parents directly and then let students know about it because again some students do not want their teachers to see their homes.

Preparation. The principal and the dean of academics recommend making appointments in advance to make sure the parent is available on certain days, so it is not like a pop-up visit and knock on the door; they intend to complete visits in 10-30 minutes. Additionally, schools develop in-service workshops for home visit preparation. Depending on the target group, they prepare teachers about what to talk about and how to act during the visits. Most of the teachers take a gift with them to the visits; it can be a bag of cookies, traditional gifts, or a book. They also take the student’s latest records to make sure they know enough about the student. Most of the times, the college counselor and assistant principal take brochures and information with them to let parents know about the college application process and financial aid part. They almost never go to home visits alone, instead they go in teams of at least two or three colleagues together. The dean of middle school was alone for a couple of visits in the past, however, he prefers to go with a team because he thinks team visits are much more effective.

Home Atmosphere and the Visiting Process

There are some challenges for the teachers because some parents do not understand the idea of a home visit at first, therefore, they question why two or three teachers are visiting their homes. The teachers understand parents and put themselves in

the parents place because they also did not know how home visits would change their perception. Some teachers thought it would take their time and energy and seemed like a frustrating event, but after they made home visits they thought it was helpful for forming a strong bond between teachers and parents. All students have different circumstances have to deal with at home that is why teachers are also worried if they wanted to visit every student's home because especially low income families would not want their teachers to see the way that they are living in. Before they go to home visits, teachers inform the parents it would be an informal visit and usually take a bag full of cookies. Teachers first introduce themselves and start talking about the school in general. According to the head of ESL department, often students and teachers engage in a conversation like, "Oh, I didn't know you had a pet or were involved in church."

By just sitting and talking families relax, especially when food is involved, good things to take are cookies or popcorn, or they might have even prepared some food in advance; these make the visit informal and conversation goes friendly. Sometimes parents open a friendly conversation and share their concern or feedback about the school. It might get easier to solve a problem in the parent's convenient place because it is a nonthreatening environment for parents. Also it might not be easy to find three teachers together in the school, so teachers can solve a problem while together at the student's home. Most of the teachers actually avoid speaking about specific things regarding students during their visit, unless there is a query from parents. The social studies teacher did not want to talk about negative things during her visits, however, if there was a positive thing about the student, she liked to point it out. She thinks parents

like their teachers coming to their home because she went to seven visits in one semester; at six of them parents prepared meals for teachers.

Teachers sometimes start conversations by showing the database that they have because some parents do not know how to access their children's information online. In these cases, they give parents a list of teachers and how to get in touch with them. They also go with a translator to the families who do not speak English. They learn about the families first hand and they ask if parents have any problem regarding the school. The families appreciate their teachers' visit at their homes as the school principal mentioned. They also inform families what they offer at school. For example, one parent did not know about the tutoring program that school offered; it was a discussion point during the home visit.

Some teachers are primarily interested in seeing where their students live. Sometimes they notice students do not have their own room; they share their room with their brothers, sisters or grandparents. The Dean of middle school wanted to know what makes the students act the way they act in school; is it their home environment?

If you're perceptive you can see something during the home visit. Generally houses are clean, sometimes not. Any information we gather during the visit, we keep to ourselves, but our goal is to show parents that we are there to support their children.

Even though parents wonder about their student's behaviors in school, the Dean of middle school tries to be positive, usually addresses what students need to work on. On the other hand, the assistant principal mainly talks about the college related issues because he thinks most parents do not have an idea how to get into college, the process of application and financial aids. Therefore, when he gets to students' home, after the introduction he starts talking about specific things like financial aid, he says, "Especially

financial aid is a big portion of my conversation because many parents aren't aware what they will have to deal with after college admission."

The college counselor also talks about specific things during his visits. He explains to parents about being accepted into a program and shares his expectations with families because it is their last step to post graduation. According to the college counselor, after high school some students do not want to go to college, they want to go directly to work. He then talks about real life experiences. For example, he tries to convince parents to send their children to college by telling them the difference between college graduates income and high school graduates income.

Perception of Families and Students

Family perception. As the college counselor emphasized on the practice of home visit, it is not common among public or private schools across the states; therefore, most of the families do not know what to do when teachers visit their homes because families generally did not have experiences with home visits and never saw this activity from other schools. Some families are really excited about the home visits when they understand that the teachers are devoting their extra time to talk about their children and care for their children. Even though, it is not a common practice, parents get used to it with the CMSA staff. Before visits, parents were confused sometimes or even scared if there was something wrong with their children at school or the school wanted to check on them to report them to some outside services like the department of child and family services. Once parents learn the real intention of the school staff, they open up and feel comfortable with the school staff's visit and they sometimes offer coffee or meal to teachers. The principal talked about the family perception and he said

It may depend on the family, some families may think we are coming from the children services and report them, however, the great majority of our families 99.9% know that we are visiting to share our feedback and experiences of the children.

The dean of academics mentioned about the family perception and stated

We can always advise parents to visit school, but teachers prefer to talk with the parents where they feel most comfortable because it is not a threatening environment for parents, teachers show their dedication to the families when they visit homes, also almost all of the parents are happy to hear that our teachers are going to visit their homes.

The high school counselor said

I feel sometimes families are not comfortable having people visit them at home because their home may be dirty or unclean, they do not want to clean for people to come over, some families might feel uncomfortable or nervous about it.

The dean of middle school stated

Mostly parents are a little bit nervous before the visit or even suspicious, why you are going to there for first place, by the end of the visit, they realize, you are not really there to check up on them.

Also, according to the dean of middle school, the most surprising part of the home visits was to find out how families were resilient to be visited. For his first visit, he felt there was a national tension between them and the parent because the parent felt why they were visiting and asked if they were looking for anything, the parent believed teachers would report them to the department of child and family services. Therefore, when they first arrive at home, the assistant principal talks about the reason why they are visiting their home, they tell parents they are there for their children' success in school. When parents feel comfortable about the visit, when they learn what is going on with the school and get all the information about the school, then they start asking questions or they share their concerns about the school and advice to school staff so that they can fix it. All in all, later on when parents understand it is just a friendly visit, they change their

whole perception and give teachers a brief feedback about their visit and school. A short quote from the gym teacher says, “Parents feel uncomfortable before the visit; they feel better after the visit.”

Student perception. According to the dean of academics, the majority of the students did not like the idea of home visit at first. The computer teacher mentioned how students reacted before the visit, as they perceived the visits weird. Also, the head of the ESL department assumed some of the students might be afraid because they expect teachers to say bad things about them, but she leaves the academia behind and visit the students informally, so students get curios about her and what she will say and they get excite and ask, "When are you coming to my house?" “How come they are not coming to my house?”

According to the high school counselor, some students are really interested in their teachers’ visit to their home because she says, “They are proud to show their house, their room to meet their teachers with their brothers and sisters.” There are also some nervous students about it, “What if the teachers say bad things about me?” “What if they see my room?” “I don't want them to see my room.”

The dean of the middle school stated

students hate it at first, they are either shocked to see you in their home or scared, they don't know what to do first time they see you, especially when they see you in the house, they freak out, but again same case, they realize you're not there to talk bad things about them, tell their parents all the bad things.

Also there are some students who do not like it in the beginning, but once they see their teachers in their neighborhood they say, “Hi, how are you?”

Students either show their appreciation towards their teachers for taking the time to visit their home or they do not even come to downstairs if they are shy, they hide in

their rooms. The history teacher said students sometimes presented during visit, sometimes not. They just talk to the parents if students sit quietly, so they notice the differences of the student's acts between school and home. Also, the high school counselor is curious how students react during the visits because sometimes students do not talk and they do not want to be there or they just go to their rooms.

The assistant principal and college counselor think it is a need to visit students in their real environment to understand them better, they were glad most of the times when they visited students' homes because some of the students did not feel they were cared in school before the home visit. In most unhappy cases, students do not think they are cared enough and their teachers just make money at school and do not care anything, but after the school when they see their teachers at their home, they change their perception and understand that teachers are there to help them out; therefore, it is important to spent extra time out of school. Since most of the home visits are after the school or on weekends, students see that their teachers are sacrificing their own time, not the school time that makes a big difference to gain the students' trust and motivate them in the school because they feel some people are there just to help them out.

Impacts of Home Visits

Opportunities. The school principal believes it is a good opportunity to get to know about the family and when they come back to school next days, they feel more comfortable with them because they were at the family's house, so the principals marked, "the relationship between school and family totally changes after the visit because once you visit them, they feel more comfortable coming up to you and talking to your about their problems."

The head of ESL department and the social studies teacher emphasize parents feel to come to teachers a little bit more freely, they feel welcomed at the school because they made the school and teachers available for parents in any case they need help. Parents also feel cared, school cares for their children when their teachers take time to visit their home to reach them out. The head of ESL department says, “Instead of talking to parents on the phone, going to homes make a difference. By just going home parents feel more comfortable in disclosing information about their children what is going on at home.”

The history teacher points out that some students feel more connected to the school, teachers understand the students and their situations as well. He sometimes understands better why they did not do homework because some students have many brothers and sisters, for example, one student had 12 brothers and sisters, that was surprising for him and the environment that they were living in, so it made him learn about this student. The history teacher sometimes use their visits against the students to persuade them easily and tries to use home visits as a motivation to do better since they have a personal connection with students. The high school counselor remarks the home visits as they are very helpful, but they might not be essential for every student. For her, it might be better to connect with the families who do not have a connection with the school, do not come to parent-teacher conferences.

According to the dean of academics, students learn their school cares about them, and then they are more readily to accept the teachers’ suggestions in terms of their progress at school and he said, “they are more receptive; teachers go to a different level of relationship with the parents when you go to visit their home that helps a lot.”

Also the gym teacher recommends skilled students families about the available sources of scholarships around the state and country during his visits.

Benefits. The social studies teacher thinks after the visit they have an open-line communication with parents since they have been to their home, they are welcomed to their home, “things are definitely positive, never seen a negative thing after home visits.” She and the head of ESL department sometimes refer to the visits,

- when students do not turn in their homework which is effecting their overall grade
- when students misbehave in school
- when a problem arises with students in school

Teachers can bring the third party to solve the problem easily, they can talk to their parents, if they need to, and sometimes it is enough just to mention they met their moms or dads, also teachers learn if parents care about their grade.

The principal and assistant principal mention when they inform families about all opportunities that students have at school, they get excited about that because they were not aware what was available to them. They also notice the behavioral changes after the visits, they normally have a relationship with students, but after the visit the relationship gets closer and stronger, for example, when they see the assistant principal in the hallway, students greet him, “Hi, how are you?” “How is it going?”

They feel they improve communication whether they consult the student or not because they know where the student lives, who their family is, so they have a closer relationship and teachers are not strangers for the students anymore. Therefore, the principal believes their home visit program has a critical role in the children’s education,

so does the parental involvement. He thinks parents tear down all the walls that would exist before the visit. They also increased their retention rate 3-4% in the 8th grade along by just visiting homes; their retention rate was 85% last year, and 93% this year from 8th graders to high school, so there is an impact of home visits.

Academic progress. I tried find out if there was an impact academically in students' educational progress, the dean of academics answered there is no way to measure in terms of academics how home visits impact their students, he says, "It is difficult to measure students' improvement in terms of grades because of home visits, but what improves is parents' participation in school activities."

Teachers see how much parents care about the school and parents see how much the school cares about their students, and then students engage more in school activities. For instance, when teachers know where students live, there might be some improvements, but students are not going to change overnight because they visited their homes, but it is a process. It is a beginning process, at least one can say they know where students live and this helps in a sense, but home visits do not change students completely.

On the other hand, the assistant principal marks when students see this extra support they get motivated and home visits create a different connection between students, teachers and parents. For example, when a concern arises teacher calls the parent and parents perceive the call from not the high school teacher but a teacher who visited their home and then parents work more seriously to help fix the situation. Also students realize this connection and act more carefully at school, when they act carefully; they behave carefully and get better grades according to the assistant principal. Meanwhile the principal says they do not necessarily quantify the results of the home

visits and they do not take notes during visits because they do not want their parents to feel they are there to check on them. Additionally, the college counselor thinks students feel positively encouraged and supported after the visit because students change their attitudes in school even though it was not meant, also students are motivated after the visit. He also believes the relationship between teachers and students gets closer, for example, before the home visits, students were like careless towards their teachers and school, but after the visit their attitude changed positively.

Surprising Cases and Suggestions by Teachers

Surprising cases. There are three surprising cases among all the visits that the CMSA staffs have done. The first one is with the school principal; he said there was a student whose family was in a desperate situation. A couple years ago, one of their 8th grade students was suffering badly financially, they helped this student by collecting money among the school staffs and they bought some furniture for the student's home.

Another surprising case was from the college counselor. He said he had some predictions about one of his students, when he visited the student's home, his perception totally changed towards the student because he saw how the student could succeed in school within the conditions the student had at home. When the counselor has been in the student's real environment, where he grew up, he was impressed by the student's success among the negative conditions, he says there was no parent encouraging, no desk, no study room, and no communication with the school, and after the visit he was more sensitive towards this student.

The last surprising case from the gym teacher, he saw one African student, who had a big family at least ten people living in a small house, in one of his visits. The

parent did not speak English and they were suffering in hard conditions, he said the school helped them connect with the outside services. The teacher felt like if they did not visit the student's home, they could not find out about the student's real condition and could not help them to get a better environment.

Suggestions. The dean of academics suggests home visit is a necessary thing since they are public servants, he stated, “It important to reach out to the community because parents are busy, as their job they can go to parents’ homes, when they have want to have a closer relationship other public schools can do these visits, as well.”

The history teacher talks about the language barrier because the majority of their parents do not speak English he recommends going in with a bilingual teacher or translator. The high school counselor feels a bit more concerned about the visits she recommends going to visits when they have something to talk about and she added, “teachers should be very clear about their visits because some parents might think school is checking on them or investigating them, so teachers should let parents know that it is a friendly visit.”

She also mentioned it would be good to let parents know the visits are optional, they do not have to accept the visits at their home, and they can meet at school or coffee shop after the school. The dean of middle school tells his colleagues to be relaxed, especially they are not there to growl around, look around, and check around. He also recommends, make sure it is usually an informal friendly visit and his fellow teachers have a correct attitude for it. The assistant principal, who made the most visits in one school year, feels teaching is a great job but if they do not visit students’ homes, they cannot get an idea what is going on at home. This motivates him as a teacher and he tries

to help students succeed in school, he even thinks it is important to educate teachers and he recommends every teacher to visit the students' homes. He believes without knowing the real condition of the student, teaching might not be effective. Finally, the principal says they will continue home visits as long as they run the school.

Chapter Five

Summary, Discussion and Limitations

Summary

In the final chapter of the study I brought together the emerged themes and their relationships with my original research questions. When the six major themes emerged some of the findings answer my research questions directly. For example, the role of the home visit in family involvement can be found in the goals of home visit section of the findings. Before home visits took place, most of the participants aimed to explain to parents what their school had to offer to their students. During the visits they told parents they had such programs tutoring or field trips that were helpful for students. The gym teacher specifically talked about the sources available for skilled students. Post visits when teachers see a problem with the children they refer to the visits and try to solve the problem faster and proper with the family involvement.

I also looked for an answer how home visits impacted the student's academic process. I found out there was no certain measurement to evaluate the impacts of the home visits. As the dean of academics agrees, we cannot measure what level home visits impact the students' grades. However, home visits increase the parental involvement in school activities which the school administration values it very much. Also it is important to note that students do not change overnights, so that we cannot say after the home visits students changed totally, but it changes the perception of students positively towards their school and teachers. On the other hand, home visits contribute positive changes in the students' academic process. Thus the assistant principal explains when students get extra support other than the school times, they get motivated in school and classes easily, and

the dean of academics also mentioned students became more receptive to their teachers suggestions.

It is also surprising for me to see how families change their perception about home visits; some of the families even become addicted to their teachers' visits after a few times. Since home visit is not a common practice in the educational field, unlike health institutions, in the United States, families did not have an idea what to prepare when teachers attempted to visit their homes. Therefore it was also challenging for teachers not to be misunderstood by their visits. Some families got suspicious about their visits and the dean of middle school even argued with one parent in his first visits. Some of the families had some struggles either financially or originally. I believe if most of the parents did not accept their teachers at their homes, they would have to discuss it somewhere else. Because children' educational issues are mostly same around the country, teachers and parents are dealing with. However, it is remarkable to note that parents get used to the home visits of the Chicago Math & Science Academy school staffs. They have a different approach to solve children' educational issues than most of the public and charter schools across the sates.

Discussion

I had an intention to find an answer how home visits would impact the students' engagement in school, but I could not get much responses about this query. The college counselor and the assistant principal mentioned an indirect connection between student engagement and perception towards school, when students felt they were cared enough in school after home visits, they engaged more in school activities. I think there is a need to explore this connection from maybe students' perspectives.

It is interesting to see how students act differently, mostly middle school students are excited about their teachers visit at their homes, while high school students are shy from their teachers at home and mostly do not present during the visits. Some of the teachers also got interested in seeing how they act differently at school and home. In one of my observations, I noticed how one high school student listened to his teachers very quietly during the visit and I do not know how this student acts in school. Therefore, there is a need to apply to the students' opinions if they act different and why during visits.

The high school counselor is thinking different most of the times than other participants, for example, she does not want to go to home visits just to socialize or talk to parents what is going on with the students at home, she tempts to go with a reason and wants to solve if there is a concern with the student. I agree with her at some point about having a reason, but also I agree with the dean of middle school, sometimes families relax by just sitting down and talking to each other. There is another point that I would like to discuss, it might not be necessary to visit every student, but by just going to students' homes, teachers show their dedication to parents and students after school or on weekends. Therefore, the principal and school administration believes that their homes visits have a critical importance on their success.

Limitations

There are some limitations in this study such as population and participants. The populations is limited to the Chicago Math & Science Academia school staffs because there are not more schools who practice and require home visits school-wide. Therefore, the results of this study might not reflect all of the Midwestern Charter Schools teachers'

opinions. Another limitation is the lack of a group of teachers who declined participation in our home visitation program when first approached. Also the participants are limited to the school staffs whereas there is a need to interview with parents and students to confirm the results of this study.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter



April 28, 2010

Hakan Solak
Department of Educational Administration

Larry Dlugosh
Department of Educational Administration
141C TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20100410654EP
Project ID: 10654
Project Title: Getting Parents Involved Through Home Visits

Dear Hakan:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46). This project has been reviewed as Expedited, category 7.

Date of EP Review: 04/28/2010

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 04/28/2010. This approval is Valid Until: 04/27/2011.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- * Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- * Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- * Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

For projects which continue beyond one year from the starting date, the IRB will request continuing review and update of the research project. Your study will be due for continuing review as indicated above. The investigator must also advise the Board when this study is finished or discontinued by completing the enclosed Protocol Final Report form and returning it to the Institutional Review Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,
{Mario's Signature}
Mario Scalora, Ph.D.
Chair for the IRB



Appendix B

Chicago Math and Science Academy Approval Letter



2/16/2010

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
 Institutional Review Board (IRB)
 201 Condit Dr. PO Box 880433 Lincoln, NE 68588-0433

Please note that Mr. Hakan Solak, UNL Graduate Student, has the permission of the CMSA to conduct his research at our school for his study, "Getting Parents Involved Through Home Visits".

Mr. Solak will contact our employees and parents to recruit them during our parent-teacher conference. His plan is to interview our teachers, who have enough experiences with home visits, either face to face or by phone calls depending on the availability of our teachers. Our consultation officer will provide the contact information regarding employees and parent or their participation in his research. Mr. Solak's research activities will be finished by May 1st, 2010.

Mr. Solak has agreed not to interfere our teachers and parents after his study is published. Also, employees will not be allowed to complete the interviews during their duties at school. Mr. Solak has also agreed to provide a copy of the University of Nebraska IRB-approved, stamped consent document before he recruits participants at school, and he will also provide a copy of any aggregate results to my office.

If there are any questions, please contact my office.

/s/ Arif Ulmez
 Principal
 Chicago Math and Science Academy

Appendix C

Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

My name is Hakan Solak and I am a graduate student in the Educational Administration department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I am doing a research that explores how parents involve in their children's education through home visits and how they value the home visits done by Chicago Math & Science Academy teachers. I am conducting this research by myself, I have developed research and interview questions, and I will collect the data information. I will develop themes to report the results of the study in my thesis.

We will set a schedule depending on your availability. You will be asked 7 open-ended questions during the interview that will take about 30-45 minutes. I am asking you to commit only one-hour utmost in this project. Throughout the project, with your permission, I will make audio tape recordings of our interviews. These recordings will be considered as the main data for this project. Only my advisor, Dr. Larry L. Dhugosh and I will have the access to the audio recordings. All information gathered will be strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet for 5 years.

There are no risks to you in this study. You may benefit to give the insight of home visits from your vision to public by your participation in this study. You will also have an opportunity to share your experiences and ideas to see how they are connected to others' experiences and ideas.

I will publish the results of the study in my thesis. Any of your statements or quotes that I use from the audio recordings will be credited to you, unless you decide to use a different name. Your name will appear in my thesis, but if any information arises that is hurtful to you, I will create a different name for you to protect your identity. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time with no penalty. If you have any questions about this research, you can call me at 402-314-6920 or email me at solakhakan@huskers.unl.edu. You may also contact my thesis advisor, Dr. Larry L. Dhugosh at ldhugosh1@unl.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact IRB, Institutional Review Board at University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Thank you for your consideration. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you. If you agree to participate in this research project, please sign below:

| | | | |
|----------------------------|------|-----------------------------|------|
| Participant's signature | Date | Investigator's signature | Date |
| Participant's name printed | | Investigator's name printed | |