

Relational Parent- Teacher Home Visits in Saskatchewan

**SSBA Spring General
Assembly**

April 8, 2022



The Opportunity

Provincial Education Plan Framework 2020-2030

- Fostering connections and relationships between educators, students, and their families,
- Creating inclusive, safe, and welcoming school environments.

The pillars of connections and relationships drive the goals through which students learn what they need for their future, feel safe and supported, belong, are valued, and can be themselves.

The Saskatchewan Context

- Saskatchewan has a long, rich history in community education philosophy and practice, dating at least back to 1980.
- Recent interest in the work of Dr. Debbie Pushor (U of S), and Kevin Cameron (North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response) is re-focusing Saskatchewan's educator sector on the vital importance of connections and relationships.
- Building connections through home visits is an evidence-based high-impact practice that is relatively easy to implement to respond to this challenge.

The Model

- The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project (www.pthvp.org) has been in existence in the U.S.A. since 1998. It is a not for profit organization.
- This initiative is in 700 schools across 28 States, and now in Saskatchewan.
- Two-visits model: The first visit is focused on relationships. The second visit is relational, and can also focus on academics.

Five Non-Negotiable Core Practices

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

A Saskatchewan Pilot

- The SSBA submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Education to initiate a project in 2021-2022, which was approved.
- The SSBA confirmed the participation of five school divisions in this project (Holy Trinity, Sun West, Northern Lights, Regina Public, and Ile-a-la-Crosse).
- A research study was implemented to be conducted alongside the pilot. Dr. James McNinch was secured to lead this research.
- An Advisory Committee was formed to guide the work.

Participation by division, schools, staff, families and number of visits

Five School Divisions	Number of Schools	Number of Participating Staff	Number of Participating Families	Number of Visits (1 st /2 nd)
North. Lights	1	2	3	3 (3/0)
Ile-a-la Crosse	1	2	20	40 (20/20)
Holy Trinity	2	14	32	55 (32/23)
Sun West	2	19	46	67 (46/21)
Regina Public	2	15	42	84 (42/42)
	8	52	143	249 (143/106)

Research Design and Methodology

Action Research and Indigenous methodologies:

Respectfully honor the voices of the participant

- ✓ engagement
- ✓ inclusivity
- ✓ dialogue
- ✓ building relationships
- ✓ learn by doing
- ✓ provisional tries

Holy Trinity Catholic School Division's Story

- June 2021: coming “out” of the pandemic, 2 administrators were approached to start this project in their schools
- All Saints Catholic School in Swift Current and Ecole St. Margaret in Moose Jaw
- ASCS- rural school with many newcomer families
- ESM- French Immersion school building relationships/enrolment
- Both administrators had great interest from staff
- Training in Aug/Sept 2021 with PTHVP



Life line to relationships

- Staff, students and parents were looking for reconnection
- 6 classroom teachers, 2 support teachers, 4 educational assistants, 2 administrators who did the visits
- Classroom teachers reached out to every family asking for volunteers- hesitancy but many accepted
- Creative solutions to when & where to meet



COVID-19

- Almost immediately following our first training sessions, the city of Swift Current, was hit hard with COVID cases
- Fear and hesitancy to participate; first visits were pushed to November 2021
- School in Moose Jaw was able to begin earlier and it made managing the pandemic much simpler- especially in Saskatchewan winters
- Some families and staff needed to remove themselves from the program
- Second visits- many were done virtually due to Omicron
- With the pandemic raging- the **need** to continue with the program became even more apparent and visits crucial and worthwhile for all



Purpose & First Meetings

- At the heart, HTCSD had many purposes- Mental Health & Wellbeing, reconnection, building relationships
- Belief: parents and teachers are partners and co-educators of children; parents being the first teachers
- First visits were awkward at first but with the focus on Hopes & Dreams, families quickly opened up



Makafui's story

Makafui is very proud of his heritage. He showed us this photo of his first picture at his school in Ghana. He loves to show this picture.

This year, Makafui chose to wear similar type clothing for picture day. It was amazing.

They are from Ghana and Togo. They speak both languages and Tri.

Mom is very happy and proud that Makafui loves school and and that he is trying his best all the time.



Reaction

- Teachers reported feeling “new life” in the reconnection with families- more staff wanted to join
- Families did not want the staff to leave
- Parents were proud to be part of a school where co-education was a priority
- Students could not wait for their teacher to come to their house- sadness among those not participating
- Relationship between home & school so much stronger- everyone just knew each other a little more
- Professional reflection & partnerships developed
- Change in the behaviour, demeanour and relationship of the participating students

I just wanted to say that I just read about your parent teacher home visit program on Discover Moose Jaw. I think that's an amazing thing, and I think we should consider our school very lucky to be participating in it. I hope things are going well with it and wish you the best in helping developing it!



[Discover Moose Jaw Article](#)

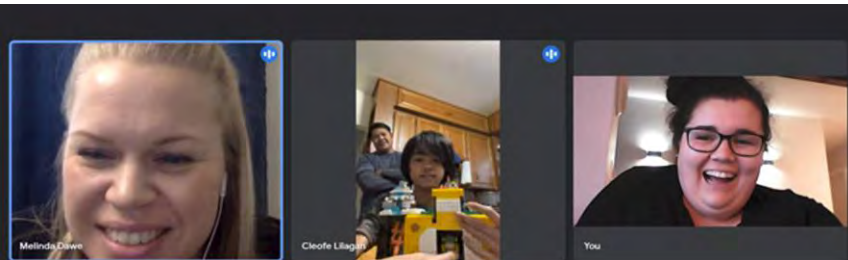
Alexa's Story

- New to school, limited contact
- Alexa's interactions- limited but yet strong, trilingual student
- Parents were excited to welcome staff who noticed a piano
- Mother burst with pride; Alexa played and sang. It was an honour for staff to be a witness to her abilities
- Debrief- need for Alexa to be connected to the school choir, play for them and "jam out" with the teacher
- Alexa was so proud to be part of her school community and to be *seen* by staff & students alike
- Alexa now seeks out the teachers, asks about their day, shares her continued growth in music and is a completely different child



Second Visits

- Previously mentioned, Omicron made these very difficult
- Most were done virtually but because the relationship was already established, this was not a barrier
- Some families were asking for first visits so we tried to accommodate
- Most visits continued talking about Hopes & Dreams, some academics, some transition to next grade
- If nothing else, pandemic has taught us to shift, be flexible and creative all while doing the things that matter



Great Experience!

These past few years have presented many challenges.

Students learn better when they know the teacher cares for them and about them.

The relationships built here and the value added to our education system cannot be measured!

“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” –Maya Angelou



The legacy of parent-engagement and home-school visits in Saskatchewan

1. Aboriginal Elders and Community Liaison Workers.

taking control of the narrative

2. Family Engagement in pre-K

mediating between the personal/private and the public/social

Reported Impact on Parents and Families

1. Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

healing and unlearning

2. Concerns of and for Newcomers.

proud parents anxious about schooling

3. Hospitality and Reciprocity

the gift of meeting & sharing

having a cup of tea together

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- 1. Impact on the Research**
- 2. Impact on the elements of the Pilot Project**
- 3. Impact on the teachers and other school staff**
- 4. Impact on the participating Parents**

Future Considerations

1. Communication and Leadership

be clear and direct

have a strategy for engagement

identify barriers and opportunities

2. Staff Roles and Expectations

engage the whole school

support the process in multiple ways

a pilot is a provisional try

Future Considerations

3. Teacher Time and Work Intensification.

How can this work within collective agreements?

What do we do less of to make room for home visits?

4. Support for a Saskatchewan Home Visit Model.

What makes each school and division unique?

What can parents and the community offer?

5. Next steps in the research

Speak directly with families

Prepare a final report for the SSBA.

Thank You.

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www.saskschoolboards.ca