



Home Visitations

They were treated like celebrities when they visited the homes. Read why in the **Going Beyond** folder for Chapter 12 or scan the QR Code in the book.

“Oh, the Professor!”

The Park Hotel was built and opened in December 1934 and it was tallest building in China until 1966. It also occupied one of the most prestigious, central locations in Shanghai at the time. All signs that show mileage start from the Park Hotel location. For some time, the general manager was a Mr. Loo who subsequently immigrated to the United States.

One day, Harry Wong went to visit Mr. Loo and when Mr. Loo saw Harry, he said, “Oh, the professor!”

Harry was 25 years old and had been teaching for two years, yet he was honored and recognized as “the professor.” That is the respect given to teachers all over East Asia. Teachers are respected and treated like celebrities.

Head Start

Home visits by teachers aren't a new idea—the Head Start program has used them for many years. Head Start teachers are required to make at least two home visits for each student during each school year, in addition to regular parent-teacher conferences at school. Many U.S. kindergartens also require home visits by teachers before school starts.

We Were Treated Like Celebrities

Home communication was high up on the list of our being an effective school. We began these home visits last year and were very pleased with the warm reception by parents (many who had negative experiences during their own schooling). Some of our parents had never received any schooling in their lives. Kindergartners were not very surprised to see a teacher at their door, whereas older siblings were excited to see a real, live, teacher at their door.

We were treated like celebrities, with students running to the apartment next door, asking their neighbors to come out and meet their teacher. It was heartwarming to see these sweet, eager faces as they, too, prepared themselves emotionally for their first day of school. In the past, I had never really thought about my students in their home environment, especially prior to the first day of school.

A few students ran to their rooms to pull out their new backpacks to show us. One little girl ran upstairs to bring down a toy her mother had bought her to teach the letter sounds. She told us that she was getting ready to learn to read. That was such an important realization for me: the kids want something out of school, too.

Some parents had questions about our school dress code. Some parents pulled out work that their children had completed in preschool to show us the amazing kids with which we were about to be blessed. Many parents invited us in and offered us a drink or a snack.

Home Visitations (continued)

The first year, many of us went out to buy pencils and special things for the kids. I even went to our public library to get pamphlets to hand out. It was nice to have something to give them. This past year, however, our school received a grant, and we were allowed to use funds to provide pencil boxes filled with supplies for our students. For some of my kindergartners, it was the first time they had ever owned something personal. They dove into their boxes with glee and pulled out the treasures one by one, sometimes identifying the supplies. They all knew what the new packs of crayons were for, and they gasped when they opened the boxes and looked inside.

*Our first home visits were a very new idea, but the next year, the teachers were all veterans. We eagerly requested our class lists from our school office staff and went back to our classrooms and listed each student by address. We teamed up for safety and also for language. I am not fluent in Spanish, but most of my students' parents speak only Spanish. My partner-teacher would translate for me when the proper wording was critical. Our principal allowed us to be paid for each home we visited, but I would have no problem doing it for free! **I will never again start a school year without having made contact with each and every student. It has been so valuable.***

***The benefits of home visits are many.** First, and most important, the parents (the most difficult part of my job in years prior) are on the same page and the same side as I am. They never question whether or not I care about their child—they know I do! My first negative discipline call is no longer negative—the parents know I want what's best for their little one and they are very willing to work with me.*

Second, the first day is no longer filled with terrified screams from children having never seen their teacher before, nervous about being dumped on the doorstep of their new school. Now, they see me as a supportive, familiar face. (Hey, I'm the lady who gave them the box of goodies.) I try to memorize their names during the home visits so I can greet them at the door of my classroom on the first day of school.

Third, I know a little bit about them, so I can place them with students who have something to offer, or students who can learn faster by being near them. A non-English proficient second-language learner will benefit from working with an English proficient second-language learner. A shy student will work well with a bright, patient student.

This year I changed to another grade level. It was even more exciting to visit my students this summer because I was introducing myself as their teacher for a second time. (I have three students in my third grade class whom I also taught back in kindergarten.) The parents seemed just as happy to have their child's third grade teacher visit their homes as when I visited as a kindergarten teacher.

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Although home visits are frowned upon today for security reasons, Peggy Campbell-Rush of Gladstone, New Jersey, uses the phone to visit each home. Her story is on page 113.