Westgate Elementary School, Kindergarten Home Visits

Plan-
- Westgate’s Kindergarten team developed a goal to meet with each Kindergarten family.
- Teachers made a wish list of supplies needed to give to families during the home visits. All supplies for this practice were donated.
- Each student received a pencil box, pencils, pencil sharpeners, crayons and a book. Each team of teachers/staff planned 15-20 minutes for each home visit.
- Teachers scheduled interpreters to attend home visits. When scheduling for visits, teachers grouped students according to their address and their home language.
- Team went on the visits in 2 separate groups consisting of a combination of either our Principal, Dean of Students, District Family Community Manager, and/or Parent Liaison.

Benefits-
- There have been many benefits from the visits; in the classroom we can use the knowledge gained from home visits. An example of this application was a student that showed us their family’s garden; now knowing this connection, we were able to incorporate the garden in class, providing relevance and familiarity when teaching a unit on pumpkins.
- We have seen in the classroom are a reduction in behavior related issues, an increase in students following expectations, and a better work ethic.
- An increase in parent volunteers and communication in both school and ATP activities.
- Parent communication has improved and we are now getting calls if a child is sick or there is a family emergency they need to share for the benefit of their child’s academics.
- We are noticing our families appear more comfortable coming to the school and seeking out ways to help their child be successful.
- Parents and students were ecstatic that we took the time to visit them at their houses and many invited us into their homes, with some families offering to have us join them for a meal, tea, or coffee.
- In a school that has many students often from immigrant and impoverished backgrounds, we have found that this program reduces student anxiety and makes teachers and faculty more approachable. Our anticipated results are a student body more apt to comfortably ask questions, communicate difficulties without fear, and as teachers and administrators, we will be able to better understand the needs of the diverse population we serve.

Modifications made to the plan as the year progressed-
- Initially we gave parents a 3 day window for the home visit. This did not work for some of our families and we wanted to make sure we made every effort to make accommodations for a successful visit. We found changing the expected home visit to an exact day with a 2 hour time frame was a more effective and appreciated approach.
- Most visits were completed during our weekly planning time. If we found we missed a student’s family after a few attempts, we would then attempt the home visits from 4:00-7:00PM.
- We found that families and teachers found the visits more comfortable and personable without interpreters present. We found that most families with language barriers already had had friends and family they felt comfortable there along with them to greet us.