



The Guide to Digital Home Visits

As districts shift to remote learning, the school-home connection becomes even more important to ensure all students—especially those at risk—remain engaged with school personnel and activities as strongly as they can.

Home visits are one of the best ways to build strong school-home relationships, even during a school or district closure. Digital home visits provide a positive opportunity for educators, families, and students to convene, strengthen relationships, and create action plans to continue growing.

Whether or not you have conducted home visits before your school shifted to remote learning, we'll explore the reasons these events are crucial and establish how we can create digital relationships, near or far.

This guide is organized in three sections:

- 1 Why Digital Home Visits Are Important**
- 2 How to Build Digital Relationships**
- 3 The Digital Home Visit Checklist**

Why Digital Home Visits Are Important

1 Your Students Miss You More Than You Know

Students are used to seeing you for the majority of the day, most days of the week. You are an integral part of their life, and they see you as a stable, nurturing role model in their life. Whether they express this or not, they admire you and feel separated from you.

2 Home Visits Help You Understand Your Students

What are your students' current housing and home environments like? How does that impact the way they show up to school (normally) or their life experience during the school closure? **The insights that come from a home visit are powerful**, and you can use that information to better understand and therefore better support your students.

3 Home Visits Help Student Performance

A 2015 John Hopkins study found that students whose families receive a home visit had 24% fewer absences and were more likely to read at or above grade level than similar students whose families did not receive a visit.

4 Home Visits Can Shift Mindsets

Parent teacher home visits **can shift mindsets in ways that improve partnerships between educators and families**. These shifted beliefs can include:

- Realizing that interactions with educators don't have to be negative or uncomfortable.
- Increased confidence in reaching out to educators and communicating student needs.

5 Hopes and Dreams Don't Stop Because of Remote Learning

Families and students need your support and motivation more than ever. As districts shift to remote learning, we must keep our students' and families' hopes and dreams top-of-mind. **Simply asking, "What are your hopes and dreams for your child?" can build trust** and ensure that we keep everyone on track to achieve those goals even though we aren't seeing students every day in a classroom.



3 Easy Ways to Build Digital Relationships



Regularly Send Quick Messages

Sending a quick text message or email to a student's family—or to the student directly—will make a powerful impact without taking too much of your time.

Example: *"Hi! How are you doing today at home? Please tell {{student name}} that I miss them and that I say hello!"*

Bonus:

Send a selfie picture along with the message so that students can see your face and know that you are well.



Schedule Digital Home Visits

All families and students deserve digital home visits, but during this time of school closure, you will want to identify your most vulnerable, at-risk students and get in the routine of having regular digital home visits with them and their families.



Provide Activity or Enrichment Videos

The longer students are at home, the more families will want a break, and students will want to see/hear you. Consider recording a video of yourself doing a read aloud or some type of grade-level appropriate activity and share it out with your class via text or email.

This will provide temporary relief for the parents or guardians, as well as an opportunity for your students to connect with you.

The Digital Home Visit Checklist

1 Planning

- Contact the family and establish a time for a phone call or a video call
- Discuss the goal or objective of the call
- If conducting a video call, prepare an appropriate place in your home. This should include:
 - Professional background
 - Clean space
 - Good lighting
 - Close proximity to your WiFi router for a strong connection

2 Review Digital Visit Etiquette

- Wear professional clothing even though you're at home
- Check your audio and video before the meeting to troubleshoot any issues
- Mute yourself when you're not talking to avoid background noise
- Mute phone and computer notifications to avoid noisy interruptions

3 The Visit

- Warm introduction
 - Introduce yourself
 - Thank the family for their time and participation, etc.
 - Let the student know you miss seeing them
 - Provide an overview of what the call is (and is not)
- Review the goal or objective of the call
 - Provide time for family input
- Discuss student strengths
- Provide school/district status updates
- Review ideas and practices for home activities during school closures
- Share relevant resources
- Answer questions
- Discuss next steps
- Ensure the family knows how to contact you
- Warm goodbye

4 Follow-up

- Document and evaluate your visit based on district protocols
- Send a follow-up message to the family with the resources, activities, and next steps you discussed
- File/Submit your documentation based on district protocols