

# Improving the Transition to Kindergarten for Students and Families through Home Visits

## Background

- The transition to five-year-old Kindergarten (5K) is a key opportunity to build productive family/school relationships and create a supportive learning environment for every child
- The Madison Education Partnership (MEP) and Center for Research on Early Childhood Education (CRECE) have partnered with the Madison Metropolitan School District to develop and study home visits to support this transition
- The goal of the home visits is:
  - For teacher to learn about the intellectual and cultural resources of the family, the child's home environment and the child's strengths and challenges, building on Moll's insights into funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez, 1992)
  - For teachers to share information with the family about the transition to kindergarten
  - For teachers to build rapport with students and families prior to kindergarten entry

## Methodology

### Teacher sample

All kindergarten teachers in MMSD were contacted to participate

- Twelve teachers from seven schools engaged in a professional development designed by Beth Graue (CRECE) that framed home visits within a Funds of Knowledge approach, which recognizes the assets, rather than the deficits of communities, families and children.

### Student sample

- Using a randomized controlled trial, eight students from each teacher's class sampled to participate in home visits.
- A total of 144 families were invited to participate, and 80 families participated.

### Treatment: Home Visits

- Each family was visited twice; the first visit occurred between July until early August and a second between early September to mid-October
  - First visits in summer focused on teachers learning about children and their families.
  - Second visits in the fall focused on teacher learning and on teachers sharing information and replaced participating students' Ready-Set-Go conferences.

### Data

- Teachers were asked to write a reflection on each visit they completed. Reflections included description of setting and participants in visit, assets and challenges of the child, strengths of child's family to support child.
- Research assistants observed visits with two randomly chosen families (on two occasions each).
- Interviews in the fall with all treatment teachers engaged in home visits, two randomly chosen parent-child pairs for each treatment teacher, and 14 control teachers without home visits.

Table 1. Demographics of Participating Students (N=80)

Race	N	%	English Language Learner	N	%
White	50	63	Yes	12	15
Hispanic/Latino	12	15	No	68	85
Black/African American	10	12	Free/reduced lunch Eligibility	N	%
Asian	5	6	Yes	26	33
Multiracial	3	4	No	54	67
Gender	N	%	Special Education	N	%
Female	42	53	Yes	7	9
Male	38	47	No	73	91

## Findings

Some themes that have emerged from our preliminary analyses include:

- Teacher Application-** How teachers have drawn from Funds of Knowledge to support children's learning or address challenges in the classroom.
- Parental Concerns/Special Needs-** By receiving important information during visits, we're interested in how teachers have been able to connect with in- and out-of-school resources to support children and families.
- Relationship Building-** How relationships between the teacher and parent, as well as the teacher and child, have been supported through the visits.
- Logistical hurdles-** Home visits may require a fair amount of work including scheduling the visits and dealing with tentative rosters.

### Future analyses will:

- Add to research literature that identifies how home visits can be a tool for fostering relationships between schools and communities.
- Identify the benefits and costs of home visits in support of families' and children's transition to Kindergarten.
- Offer insights into how to strengthen teacher's understanding of the Funds of Knowledge approach to home visits.
- Identify best practices for district-wide home visit programming in MMSD should the district choose to expand home visits.

"She spends equal time with Mom and Dad, given that they are separated. She also comes from a family with much older siblings, so a lot of her home reactions are around adults. Knowing these things about the student, she enjoys functioning more independently and maturely. As I teach her throughout the year, I hope to tap into this strength of hers by giving her special jobs and using her as a peer model and help he classmates. I also plan to incorporate her interests into the themes and subjects were learning about."

- From teacher A's home visit reflection

Figure 1. Timeline for the Home Visit Project in 2018



## Research Team

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## References

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