





GOALS AND ROLES

Classroom Visit Procedures

Classroom Visit Procedures

Classroom Visits allow families to support the school's work by assisting in the classroom, often providing enrichment opportunities for students. Classroom Visit Procedures are necessary and help to ensure that school staff has ample time to plan and incorporate the visit into the day's activities and not disturb other learning processes. The tools on the following pages will help you to:

- Assess the strength of your Classroom Visit Procedures
- Develop Classroom Visit Procedures for your school

Classroom Visit Procedures

- 1. Is advance notice required? If so, how much in advance? Whom does the parent call to request a visit? Where does the visitor first report when entering the school?
- 2. How is the teacher notified?
- 3. What is the role of the parent when visiting? Where is the parent to sit? How much is the visitor to be involved?
- 4. What is the role of the teacher? How will the teacher greet the parent and explain briefly what is going on in classroom?

Welcoming Letter for Visitor

Draft a brief, friendly letter to Dear Visitor that explains the policy and can be handed to the visitor when registering at the office before proceeding to the classroom. A sample letter is available on the next page.

Dear Visitor,						

Classroom Visit Guidelines

Families are an important part of a child's education and learning. They are welcome to visit their child's classroom to observe instruction and class activities. Parents/family members: Please follow these guidelines to schedule and visit your child's classroom. Thank you.

- 1. If you wish to visit your child's classroom, please contact the principal at least one to two days in advance at (*phone number; email address*). The principal will notify the teacher of the time and date of the arranged visit.
- 2. When you arrive at the school, please stop in the office to sign the register and obtain a VIP visitor's badge. Please silence your phone before entering the school.
- 3. While visiting the classroom, parents are asked to quietly observe, or, if requested, provide assistance to the teacher or students. To ensure the privacy of all students, please do not take photographs or video or audiotapes in the classroom.
- 4. We ask that you limit observational visits to one (1) class period per month per child, in order to minimize disruption of the classroom schedule and educational program.
- 5. During your visit, the classroom teacher will continue to provide instruction to students. Any questions should be addressed to the teacher at a later time. The teacher will provide a short form before you leave the classroom with contact information.

Your School Community Council may wish to provide this (or a similar) form to your teachers.

Example:

Thank you for visiting our classroom today. Please feel free to contact me at (phone number) or (email address) with any questions or concerns regarding your child or his/her work, or to request for a conference about your child.

Mrs. Susan B. Anthony Mr. Alexander Hamilton

Classroom Visit Procedures Worksheet

Review the current procedures for parents visiting the classroom using the rubric below. If the school has no procedures in writing, use the rubric as a resource to develop procedures.

Elements of Classroom Visit Procedures	Score	Criteria for Scoring			
Lientents of Classicom visit Procedures	Score	The classroom visit procedures			
Score Guide: 0 = No evidence of criterion being met, 1 = Evidence that criterion is met					
Discuss the importance of families in their children's learning.		Include a statement of the importance of families in their children's learning and the school's encouragement of parent/family participation.			
Written in friendly and welcoming language.		Are written with parents as the intended audience, in language that is friendly, welcoming, and translated into the major languages spoken by the families in the school.			
3. Either state that no advance notice is required or specify how much advance notice is required.		Explain the school's procedures for scheduling and advance notice for classroom visits.			
4. Tell the parent/family member who to call to set up a visit.		Provide the name, position, a telephone number, and email to call/contact to schedule a visit.			
5. Tell where the visitor first reports when entering the school.		Give directions for where the office is located and check in procedures.			
6. State how the teacher will be notified of a visit.		Explain how the teacher is notified that a visit has been scheduled or, when advance notice is not required, how the teacher will be informed that the parent/family member is in the office and will soon be visiting.			
7. State the role of the parent/family member when visiting.		Explain expectations for parents to guide them when they visit, that is, whether the parent will be provided a chair or may move about the classroom, whether the parent may interact with his/her child or should be a silent observer.			
8. State the role of the teacher during a visit by a parent/family member.		Explain that the teacher is expected to proceed with classroom instruction while the parent visits and how parents/families can contact the teacher for more information or a conference after the visit.			
Total Score	Total Score				

Resources for Classroom Visits

The following information is from Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships, by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies (p. 85 & p. 90).

Classroom visits give parents a front-row seat on what happens at school. Parents may know something about standards, but they probably don't know what a standards-based classroom looks like. How do teachers structure lessons so that students do research, solve real-world problems, and pursue their own interests? What are critical thinking skills and how do teachers develop them?

Start the school year with "Check Out the Classroom" days and encourage families to visit throughout the year. For families who can't come during the day, demonstrate lessons at curriculum nights, book fairs, Saturday academies, and other family events. In middle and high schools, parents can "shadow" their students, following them from class to class during a morning or afternoon.

Preparing Parents to Work in the Classroom

Although volunteering in the classroom is a good way to see what students are learning, many parents don't feel confident taking on that task. Mary Lou Amato, a principal in Los Angeles, has this advice: "We had a big push to get parents involved in the classrooms, and it didn't work. There were language issues, and parents felt they lacked content knowledge. Then parents came up with an interesting idea: why can't we work in the parent center to support the teachers? This was a big stepping stone to getting parents into the classrooms. The Open Court reading program has takehome books and other things that need to be put together. Parents were proud to do that and bring them to the teacher. They started reading things. They felt productive and that they were doing something important. Then they were ready to go into the classroom."

By the time students are in middle and high school, many of their mothers are working full time. Instead of volunteering in the classrooms during the day, parents can run a student study center after school. Teachers can help parents develop the program and learning materials such as practice sheets and homework organization tools. Parents can also attend professional development classes to upgrade their teaching skills. Here are some services such parent-run centers can offer:

- **→** Tutoring in various subjects
- → Organization and study skills
- → Test proctoring to help students make up missed exams
- → English as a Second Language
- ★ Test-taking skills
- **→** Writing college essays

Henderson, Anne T., Mapp, Karen L., Johnson, Vivian, R., & Davies, Don. (2007). *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family–School Partnerships*. New York, NY: The New Press.

More resources for Classroom Visits

The following information is from Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships, by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies (p. 63).

Do	Don't
1. Walk right into any classroom that does not already have three visitors.	1. Go into any room that already has three other visitors.
2. Go into the room along the side or back.	2. Disrupt the students' learning.
3. Observe what is happening in the room.	3. Take pictures without prior permission.
4. Talk with staff members only if approached by them.	4. Ask staff questions while they're engaged in teaching.
5. Leave when you want. Spend no more than 20 minutes in one room unless otherwise arranged.	
6. Leave messages or questions for staff in their mailboxes.	
7. Ask the principal any question you want.	

Henderson, Anne T., Mapp, Karen L., Johnson, Vivian, R., & Davies, Don. (2007). *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family–School Partnerships*. New York, NY: The New Press.

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