

Lawhon Home Visits 2008-2009
Submitted by Christy Carroll

Goal: To build a strong relationship between school and home. Each student and family will receive a visit from Lawhon staff members before school begins.

The desire for Lawhon Elementary staff members to make home visits began at the 2008 Administrative Retreat. After the seed was planted, I began considering organization, safety, and a budget to make the visits possible. I contacted Officer David Harville, our School Resource Officer, to discuss safety issues. He informed me that any area in Tupelo would be safe for us to visit as long as we used "common sense." With his help, I compiled some basic rules for staff members to follow when making visits. Some of these included: travel in teams; be aware of your surroundings; never leave keys, purses, or bags visible in your car; and if you do not feel safe, do not stay in the area. When scheduling visits, we decided staff members should contact families to schedule the visits during daylight hours. Since there would be no unannounced visits, Officer Harville felt this would decrease any risks.

After feeling confident that visits could be made safely, a plan for reimbursing each staff member's time and travel was developed. Time was compensated through early dismissal from some staff meetings on Wednesday afternoons throughout the year, and a local company ensured gas was provided for visits.

After submitting a proposal to Dr. McCoy and receiving permission to proceed, I met with staff members on July 14 to present the idea. Lawhon staff members were very receptive to the idea and agreed to be involved. We developed teams of two and three staff members. Homeroom teachers were paired with assistant teachers and other support staff to ensure that no one made visits individually. A couple of teachers with medical issues did not participate so Coach Linder and I teamed with partners to visit their students. A timeline was established with a goal of visiting all participating families by "Back to School Night" on August 5, 2008. With one goal, building relationships, in mind, teachers contacted parents during our flex day training on July 14 and July 15 to schedule visits. While teachers attempted to contact all parents, some were unable to be reached. Most parents who were contacted did want a visit. If a visit was not convenient, some agreed for us to leave information at the door.

Schedules of visits were submitted to me so I would be aware of each team's plan. Staff members visited students and parents at their front doors. Balloons purchased by our PTO and registration and other information were delivered. At the conclusion of the day's visits, teachers reported to me as another safety net. There were no accidents or issues that occurred. The greatest problems reported were that some parents wanted staff members to visit too long making it hard to stay on schedule, and some insisted team members come inside making it difficult to abide by our guideline of visiting at the door. Overall, the visits were a great success for Lawhon Elementary.