



New Hampshire Charter School Office

Best Practice Submission Form

School Name:	Next Charter School
Best Practice Title:	Home Visits for New Students
Applicable Categories:	<input type="checkbox"/> Accountability and Performance Monitoring <input type="checkbox"/> Business Operations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community/Student Engagement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Curriculum Design <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership & Governance <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recruitment and Retention (Staff or Student) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School Culture <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
School Mission:	The mission of Next Charter School is to meet the needs of students not fully served within a traditional high school educational program, and to employ a system of instructional and assessment practices that values competency, inquiry, flexibility, and the social nature of learning so that all students will graduate and initiate post-secondary learning options.
Purpose:	To make sure students teachers as partners in learning, not as adversaries to battle with.
Summary:	<p>We are very intentional about how we on-board new students, considering our mission to offer personalized learning experiences. In the spring, we host a new student dinner, where students and their families are partnered with a current student to have a meal together. Over the summer, we host a new student cookout. While these events have proven effective to help students get excited about attending Next, we have found the most effective thing we do is offer to visit all new students at their home in the week before school starts.</p> <p>We have conducted home visits for new students every year since we opened in 2013- even during Covid, although we met with families outside with masks on. There are many benefits to this practice, but here are some of the most impactful:</p> <p>First, it is symbolic in showing families how important the home-to-school connection is. Over a student's time at Next, we ask families to come to school for meetings, events, pick-ups, and drop-offs. We ask a lot of them, but we do so because it is important that students feel supported by people at the school and at home. By going to their</p>



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	<p>house, we can show that we are willing to put in effort and that we want to get to know families.</p> <p>Second, it lets us get to know students in a setting where they are already comfortable. They get to show us their pets, introduce us to their siblings, and show off their hobbies- artwork, a project car, a stone wall. We can collect more data in a 15-minute home visit than we ever could through surveys or phone calls.</p> <p>Finally, we have a picture of what the student's home environment is like. Often, just setting up the meeting is eye-opening. Some families are delighted to host a staff member and will bake brownies or have fresh lemonade prepared for us. Others are very wary and don't want us anywhere near their homes. Getting a glimpse into where a student goes to at the end of the school day is incredibly helpful in figuring out how to teach them. The impressions these visits make are also long lasting.</p> <p>It might seem impossible to pull something like this off, but it is worth the hassle. In the week before school starts, our staff meets regularly, and we give updates about the students we have visited. One important strategy in pulling off home visits is to be entirely non-judgmental and to make sure families know it is totally optional. Staff members need to approach each home with kindness and curiosity and even a sense of gratefulness for the family's willingness to host a visit.</p>
Partner(s) in Development:	Staff members at Next
Contact Person:	Emily Whalen, Director ewhalen@nextcharterschool.org
Resources or Documentation:	None, although any staff member at Next would be able to share anecdotes about how this practice has informed/changed their teaching.