



Promising Partnerships Practices

2022

A collection of initiatives from districts and schools
about working with families and community partners
for student learning



State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education



COLORADO
Department of Education

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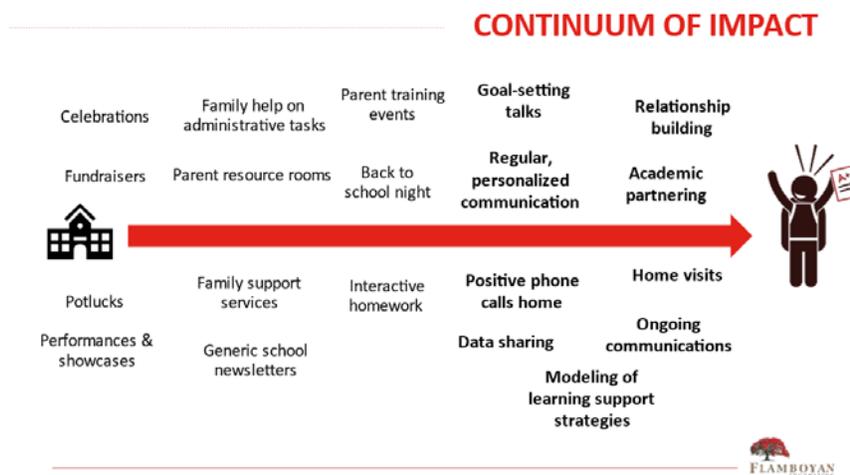
Introduction



The State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) are pleased to share this eighth annual collection of *Promising Partnership Practices*. The purpose of this publication is for schools, districts, and other educational organizations in Colorado to highlight how they partner with families and the community for student success.

Over 55 years of research indicate that students are more likely to succeed both academically and behaviorally when schools, families, and communities work together. This publication includes 25 practices categorized by Colorado’s Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP) Framework (CDE, 2020) and the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2022).

Several themes emerged in this year’s compilation of practices. The most prevalent theme was shared leadership. You’ll notice that most of the practices were either about creating a sustainable partnership team or having a team already in place to implement and evaluate initiatives. Many practices also focused on elevating families’ voices to create a more inclusive culture and promote equity. Like last year, most practices fall along the “high impact” side of the FSCP continuum.



A final theme to highlight is that every school-level practice in this publication is situated in a district that has identified a FSCP leader to guide and sustain partnership work. And each of those district leaders actively participates in supports offered by the Office of Family, School, and Community Partnerships at CDE. This demonstrates the importance of having a [statewide systemic support structure](#) that cultivates partnerships leading to positive student outcomes (Epstein and Boone, 2022).

We look forward to highlighting more practices each year and to improving outcomes for students through family, school, and community partnering.

In Partnership,

Yoni Dobie-Geffen, SACPIE Chair

Angie Frank, SACPIE Vice Chair

Dr. Darcy Hutchins, CDE Director of Family, School, and Community Partnerships

Art Walk & Cultural Food Fest

Wildcat Mountain Elementary School

Littleton, CO



Wildcat Mountain Elementary strives to provide a positive, inclusive, welcoming community that cultivates passionate hearts that contribute to the wellbeing of others. Art expression is one of the many ways students demonstrate their individual talents and perspectives. During our Art Walk and Cultural Food Fest, the building was immersed in families' heritage with students' artwork covering the interior walls, cultural dances, and food tastings from around the world. Staff and families were invited to teach cultural dances in the library, dress in attire that reflected their family's heritage, cook dishes for families to sample that emulate their family's culture, and design and create artwork that would be displayed for years to come in the community garden.

Families and staff were elated to attend the teacher sponsored Art Walk and Cultural Food Fest which gave them the opportunity to meet one another, socialize, and engage in a multitude of activities. The Art Walk and Cultural Food Fest started with an art show. Student's artwork was professionally framed and displayed in the gym and around the school. The student's artwork was also uploaded and added to an online platform which allowed friends and families in the community to purchase the artwork to raise money for the art program.



Staff and families were invited to cook their favorite family recipes to share with the community. Families donated meals from local restaurants and delivered special family dishes to the cafeteria with brief descriptions of the meal and the country of origin. Cultural dances and music were also taught by staff and families. Families and staff were eager to share and introduce three different dances to the community: Bharatanatyam, Irish Step Dance, and Greek Dance. Gracious members volunteered their time to instruct families on how to perform the dances.

Finally, Wildcat Mountain's own Green Team raised money for the Wildcat Community Garden's irrigation system by offering the opportunity to design a tile that would adhere to the outside of the garden. Cement steppingstones could be purchased by families to leave a lasting impression in the garden. Additionally, the PTO president grew plants which were then sold to families for a dollar minimum donation



The Wildcat Mountain Art Walk and Cultural Food Fest was a huge success! Compliments were heard throughout the building and emails of gratitude were received. The event raised over a thousand dollars for the art program and community garden, and lasting memories were created. Schools are greatly encouraged to plan an event like this for their community. It was a huge success, that brought the community together.

Standard 1—Welcoming All Families
Essential Element 1—Create an Inclusive Culture

Foothills PTA

Foothills Elementary School

Lakewood, CO



Foothills Elementary School is a Title I School nestled in a socioeconomically diverse neighborhood. The school represents families from five continents, speaking twelve different languages. The PTA and school community recognized that Foothills has had some ongoing challenges with recruiting, sustaining, and engaging diverse families from all walks of life. Staff and family leaders identified that the biggest challenge in getting families to attend school functions is childcare. Many Foothills families work more than one job and need childcare if they do have time to attend a PTA event/meeting. In the summer of 2021, a core family partnership planning team made the decision to seek out a grant centered on creating and advancing a more Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Foothills Elementary School PTA. This grant, offered through the Center of Family Engagement (National PTA Initiative), focused on recruiting, and involving families that are underrepresented in the Foothills PTA. Together the PTA Co-President and the Family Engagement/Diversity Liaison set forth on a mission to discover ways to encourage and support family involvement.

Foothills staff followed an action plan that the National PTA provided that included opportunities to participate in listening sessions alongside other Diversity/Equity/Inclusion (DEI) grantees. Through the facilitated listening sessions, staff were able to set goals, as well as reflect and learn how to tailor outreach, initiatives, and events to better serve the Foothills community. The first step in achieving their goal to develop a more active and diverse PTA community was to complete a DEI profile template. With this template, the team reflected on which ethnicities were under-represented on the PTA. Through the action plan template, team leaders determined that the PTA lacked the participation of Foothills' second most represented family population—Latino families. Staff used that data to reach out to families within the Latino community to determine what Foothills staff could be doing differently to engage families of this population.

Subsequently, staff contacted all 54 individual families by phone, email, and face-to-face when possible. Foothills' Family Engagement Liaison shared: "It was our desire to meet with our targeted families to discuss how we can encourage their participation and involvement in the PTA. It was essential that we gave families multiple means of opportunities for their voices to be heard." Alongside Foothills' principal, staff hosted two listening sessions (virtual and in-person) and an online family survey. Foothills' liaison continues: "It was important to us to ensure that families had several ways to participate to help us discover how our PTA can provide a more equitable landscape."

During the listening sessions, staff established a safe place, ensuring the conversations were confidential. Families were encouraged to speak from their own experiences and facilitators expressed that the goal of the sessions was to learn more about the preferred ways to engage in their children's school life. Facilitators reminded families that there is not one right way to engage with the school and that everyone cares about their children and that may look different for all families. Staff helped families to see that engagement takes many forms such as watching your child in a concert or a talent show, cheering them on during a sports game, helping them with homework, advocating for their needs and accommodations, volunteering at a school event, or attending a PTA meeting. Staff shared that they value families' thoughts and any personal experiences they may have had with the PTA, whether good or bad. Attendees also learned next steps to continue the conversation beyond the listening session. Ten families responded to the Online Family Survey, one family joined for the virtual listening session, and two families and community members joined the in-person listening session.

Essential Element 1—Create an Inclusive Culture

Standard 1—Welcoming All Families



The feedback these thirteen families provided was invaluable. Foothills’ liaison states: “We learned that using multiple platforms to reach families showed that we truly care about the families’ experiences and perspectives. Families appreciated having a safe place to voice their thoughts and concerns. Most importantly, we learned that ALL families want to engage in their child’s education in some way. This work allowed us to see that comprehensive communication is key.”

It is fundamentally important to provide a safe and welcoming environment for families which includes a judgement free place to share their thoughts and ideas in the decision-making process. Lastly, staff learned that EVERY family brings a gift, talent, and contribution to the Foothills PTA table. This is a value that the PTA will be mindful of moving forward while continuing our work to support Foothills students, staff, families, and community.

Foothills’ staff are looking forward to the next phase of their DEI, PTA journey. The family liaison shares: “It is our intent to move into the second phase of the DEI Grant process to provide families with flexible times to meet including during the school day, evening, remotely, and video recordings for families that cannot attend meetings. We will provide translation services, a light meal, and childcare to accommodate the varying needs of our families. We will conduct surveys and provide families with feedback forms to ensure that families can share power and their own personal insight in the decision-making process.”

Parent Teacher Leadership Team

McElwain Elementary School

Thornton, CO



McElwain Elementary is a Title I school that houses a diverse number of students. Students come to McElwain from all over the world—Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, Afghanistan, and India just to name a few. Language and socioeconomic barriers create a challenge regarding family engagement and communication. To partner with all families, staff must provide a variety of modes of communication, multiple opportunities for involvement, and community assistance beyond the classroom as needed.

McElwain Elementary has several partnerships with outside organizations. These partnerships are managed by numerous staff and the family liaison. Over the past few years the most robust partnership has been with the Mile High United Way, The Adams 12 Five Star Foundation, and Food for Hope. Due to their constant support, staff have been able to create and plan many opportunities for our community. Additionally, with the help of Mile High United Way, staff have created a Parent Teacher Leadership Team (PTLT) that has also organized and led many events.



Community events that were held throughout the year include Coca and Coats. This event took place in early October. Staff collected new and gently used coats and distributed them to families and children in need while enjoying cocoa or coffee donated from a local Starbucks. School staff also hosted a trunk or treat in October for all families. In December many community members and staff members also adopted families and provided an entire holiday for families. This year the school supported 60 families during December and 150 Turkey meals in November. In May, staff had Reading and Recreation in which each student was able to

choose a piece of sporting equipment and a brand new book to take home to encourage reading and recreation over the summer. Staff held monthly parent meetings entitled Tea and Coffee with the Principal in three different languages where families received information and provided input. Additionally, throughout the year in collaboration with the Adams 12 Five Star Foundation, staff had an on-site pantry where parents could come and have some of their basic needs met such as food, clothing and household items. This year, 84 families and over 400 individuals received support through McElwain's onsite pantry.

These programs were evaluated using an online panorama survey taken by all interested families. They were also evaluated during the last Tea and Coffee with the Principal where 30 parent leaders attended and provided feedback as invested stakeholders. Families would like to add more cultural events next year now that we are moving away from pandemic restrictions. Overall, feedback indicates that families feel seen and heard.



To create an inclusive and welcoming environment, each school must take an inventory of their students, families, teachers, and communities. They must understand the needs of each individual and base all decisions on those needs. All humans can grow and thrive when they believe there is someone or somewhere that is there to support them. McElwain Elementary believes in that support and has exceeded what it means to be an educational institution, McElwain Elementary is a community institution.

Summer Playdates

Ryan Elementary School

Lafayette, CO



The goal of hosting summer playdates for rising rhinos at Ryan Elementary was to build community, instill confidence, welcome families, create trust, and establish relationships between families and educators. Ryan Elementary is a neighborhood school located in Lafayette, Colorado. It is a

STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) K-5. Ryan has a diverse socio-economic population, pulling students from a variety of neighborhoods in south Lafayette.

Summer playdates for rising rhinos (incoming kindergartners) started many years ago. Kindergarten teachers organize and host playdates for incoming kindergartners throughout the summer leading up to the start of the school year. Ryan’s rising rhinos and their families are given a schedule of the playdates for the summer. Teachers bring sunscreen, name tags, and sidewalk chalk as they meet their future students and their families.

Summer playdates are held at neighborhood parks that feed into Ryan. Teachers chose varying times to accommodate a variety of family schedules. In addition to hosting playdates at the park, teachers also have partnered with city entities for summer fun. An example of this is the Evening of Bedtime Stories at the Lafayette Public Library. It’s an evening of stories, crafts, and milk and cookies. The final playdate is a potluck BBQ. The teachers provide the hotdogs and families bring desserts and side dishes to share. Sometimes the side is a simple bag of chips or box of cookies. Sometimes people bring fruits or vegetables from their garden, dishes from their restaurants, or grandma's famous potato salad. It is a special time for families to showcase part of themselves and the group always end up with a feast to share.

Summer playdates are evaluated informally, primarily through conversations with families. Staff track attendance over the course of the summer, knowing that there are factors, such as work schedules, summer trips, and park location that impact a family’s ability to attend our playdates. At the start of the school year, staff have families complete a survey about kindergarten in general, and typically get very positive feedback about the summer playdate program.

Summer playdates are a simple way to build community and make the transition to school feel safe, welcoming, and exciting. One key element of the summer playdate program is going to parks in the neighborhoods that feed into the school. Additionally, if you have varying playdate meeting times it can accommodate various family schedules. Finally, having several playdates throughout the summer allows for families who are traveling, working, or with other activities the opportunity to participate. Relax and have fun getting to know your incoming students and families. Author Gina Greelee says it best, “when we establish human connections within the context of shared experience, we create community wherever we go.”



School District 49 spans 133 square miles of urban and rural areas in Colorado, covering northeast Colorado Springs and the Falcon area of El Paso County, serving more than 21,000 students. In an effort to raise awareness and connect families with local service providers, parent academy topics, and current events; the Title I office developed a one-stop-shop information resource webpage. The webpage has three components: a series of video links regarding family-based topics such as parenting skills, health and wellness, family finances, etc.; a hub of local assistance programs and contact information for each; and a current events section that is updated every few weeks and includes in-district and local community events that are geared towards families and children.

The D49 Title I Office and school-based Family Engagement Liaisons have been instrumental in identifying some of the greatest needs that D49 families have. Content for the family resource webpage was determined based on this information. Recognizing that these resources were not reaching all families; the idea of the webpage was that it would serve as a convenient and immediate tool to connect families to these resources.

The development of the Family Resource webpage is new, and the hope is that with awareness and accessibility to family-based information and resources, families will be supported and empowered, therefore contributing to family stabilization directly impacting overall student outcomes.

The D49 Family Resource webpage is currently live but will officially rollout early in the 22-23 school year. Evaluations will be conducted in the form of surveys and webpage usage data collection.

Current and anticipated challenges are ensuring that the content remains relevant, and that the webpage is updated consistently enough to encourage families to return to the webpage as a reliable resource. Anyone wanting to replicate this practice should peruse the webpage: d49.org/families and consider how this might be replicated and modified to serve the needs of families within their districts.

FAMILY RESOURCES

D49 Family Engagement One-Stop-Shop for Information and Resources



Our families are our foundation. They are made up of a wide variety of cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences; a diversity that makes us strong. We strive to make our D49 families feel safe, supported, and connected. Please utilize this site to access information on current parent academies, upcoming events, a wide variety of family-related topics, and links to district and community resources that impact families. This information is provided by Title I Family Engagement as a convenient resource/information hub, but should not be considered an endorsement of any particular agency or business.

IND Family-School Partnership Flowchart

Independence Elementary School

Aurora, CO



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During the 2019-2020 school year, when the Covid-19 pandemic took place, the Principal, Community Liaison, and Social Worker of Independence Elementary School came together to design an online survey to know family needs during this difficult time. The outcome of this survey was amazing; the goal to connect and help Independence families during the pandemic reached beyond their expectations. Hand in hand with this, the Community Liaison designed a *Virtual Resource & Contact Center* for families to find and access resources available within Cherry Creek School District (CCSD) based on their needs. During the 2020-2021 school year, they created a formal committee to update the Family Needs Survey with consideration of the circumstances present at the time. Since then, both the survey and the *Virtual Resource & Contact Center* are continually updated. Information collected helps Independence staff modify, create and/or continue with all of the Family-School Partnership practices. Necessity and logistical needs were the starting points that led them to design the “live practice” represented in the **flowchart** called Family-School Partnership / See How We Work Together.

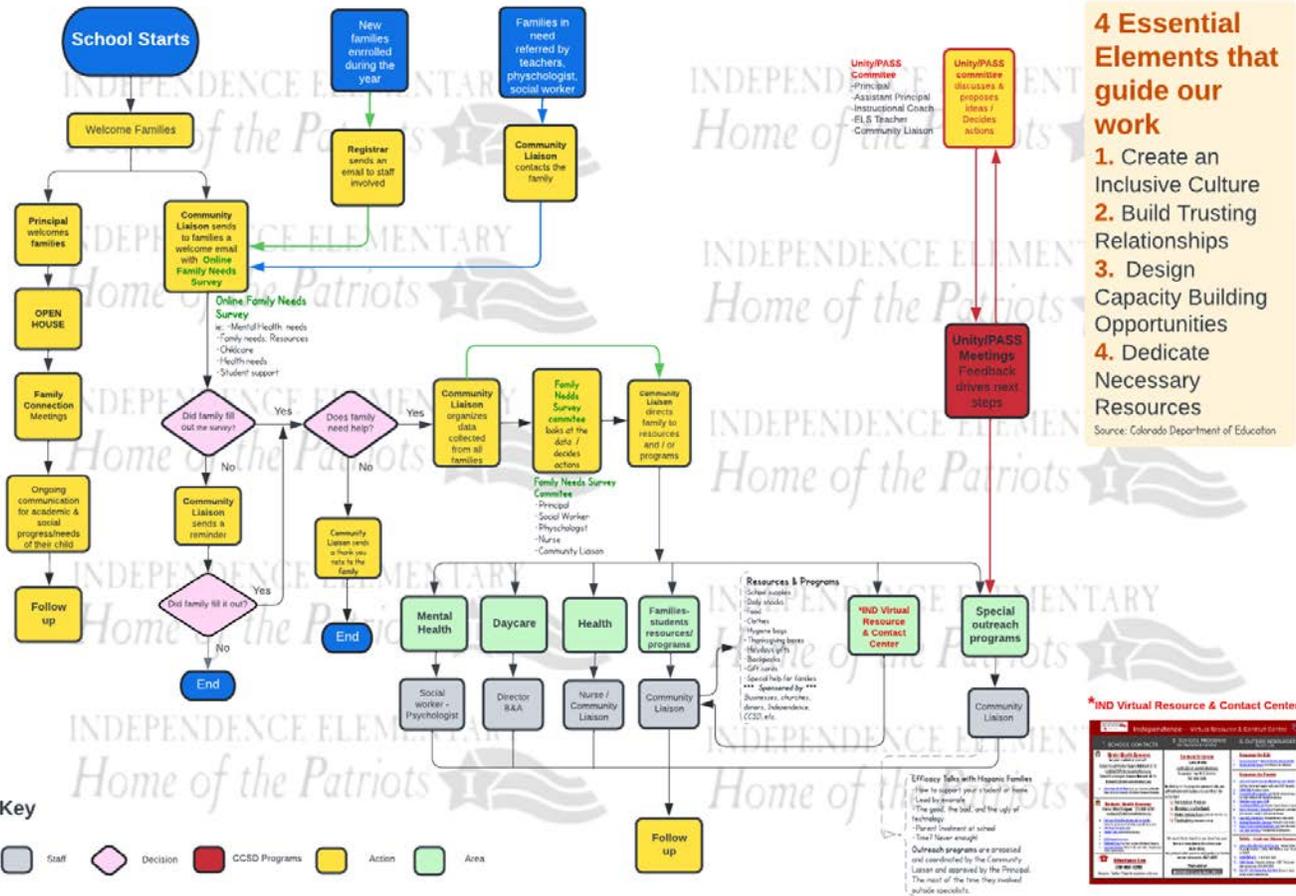
For almost three years, Independence has been following this practice. However, during the 21-22 school year, they decided to make a flowchart to show how they work together: the planning, programs, outcomes, people involved, and an overview of Independence Family-School Partnership culture. It also shows the visual process of the practice, how it facilitates changes and/or modifications needed every year to adapt to new circumstances. The description of it speaks for itself on the graph.

The practice represented on the flowchart (second page of this practice) is evaluated each year and has been a great success. The consistency of the programs, the partnership with families, and the community to support their students' success has streamlined the processes, making all involved more knowledgeable and efficient. There have been no significant challenges; instead, the practice helps Independence adapt to circumstances making necessary changes.

For other schools who might consider replicating this practice, this is the key: it is important that all people involved are on the same page to connect all the dots and to enjoy the process. Following this, the result will not be long in coming. The planning committee's advice to others wanting to replicate the event would be to start planning early to ensure families have plenty of time to prepare. Allot a materials budget and space for families to come and work on their projects. Invite community partners to come share in the festivities.

Family-School Partnership

See How We Work Together



Learning Snapshots

Wilmore-Davis Elementary School

Wheat Ridge, CO



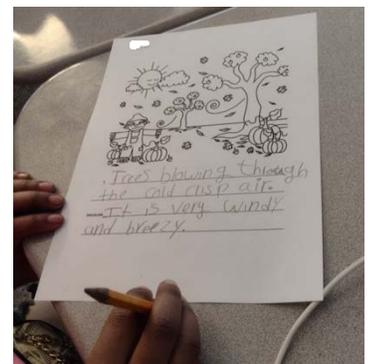
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The community at Wilmore-Davis Elementary is comprised of a diverse community including various socio-economic, racial/ethnic, education levels, work experiences, and family dynamics. This practice offers real time learning snapshots where all families can engage in effective and meaningful two-way communication regarding the main topic that every family has in common; their child/children's education. The goal of 'Learning Snapshots' was to link together several of the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships into one digestible piece of information that could be sent home in real time.

In order to plan and prepare for this type of practice, school staff called every family two weeks before school started to welcome them into the new school year, introduce the idea of the learning snapshots, and asked them to sign up for Remind (a messaging App). This process was necessary to the success that we experienced the rest of the year, not only with learning snapshots, but also with family engagement as a whole. This practice involved the collaboration of several members of the community. It relied heavily on being aware of what teachers were teaching each week. This was accomplished by sitting in on planning times and reviewing each grade level's newsletters for the week. It also relied on buy-in from families and students.

In collaboration with teachers, families joined classroom learning at pre-arranged times. This provided an opportunity to join a variety of lessons with the goal of sharing the learning taking place with families. After visiting the grade level classrooms for that week, every family in that class was sent a personalized message with a picture of the student's individualized work or the work of the class. Each message included a short description of the lesson and a question they could ask their child at the end of the day to trigger a conversation about what they learned. Families received the message in the form of communication that they choose through Remind (email, text, or the app) and in their chosen language.



This practice helped create an inclusive culture where families could build trusting relationships by offering personalized real-time communication. Families felt they played a stronger role in their child/ren's education as the messages were delivered in real time and they could ask questions or comment back. Through this practice, we have been able to communicate more efficiently. This practice was evaluated by data on Remind which displayed how often families "reacted and responded" to messaging. It was also evaluated through our Family School Partnership survey which verified that 80-90% of our families felt that we met all 6 PTA National Standards. The main challenge staff encountered was timing of classroom visits vs. communication to families. The Wilmore-David liaison shared: "Initially, we planned to visit one grade level each day. However, the time that it took to send out communications after the class visit took much longer than anticipated and in order to commit to consistent, intentional communication, we needed to cut back and focus on one grade level at a time per week."

School staff provide the following advice to replicate this practice: make sure that all planning is completed prior to implementation and personally contact families to explain the new practice and how it will benefit them. In addition, gain as much buy-in as possible from your teaching staff. This practice also needs to be consistent and concise so that every family feels valued and seen in their engagement with their interactions with their student and school.

Standard 2—Communicating Effectively

Essential Element 2—Building Trusting Relationships

Special Education Parent & Community Newsletter

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) acquired a new website platform which allowed the Special Education department to access a newsletter template. This newsletter transformed their email communication to parents into a full newsletter that was fully accessible.

The Parent, School, and Community Liaison had sent monthly emails to an opt-in parent/community email list, however the emails only included links to BVSD events and classes and was not able to be dynamic with pictures, other resources, or other languages. Therefore, the Special Education department developed a more accessible, readable, and valuable newsletter. Each issue is created by the Parent, School, and Community Liaison, is approved by the executive director, and archived on the Parent News tab under Special Education.

BVSD offers a variety of events including Common Sense Parenting classes, Parent Network groups, and workshops and webinars for parents throughout the year. The district provides all parents access to these programs, in order to allow schools to focus on school-based events and provide equitable opportunities to all families at the district level. The newsletter is a way to share these resources more effectively.

To ensure all families received the newsletter, the team pulled all parent emails associated with a student with an Individual Education Program (IEP) and merged them into a mail list. This is done each fall to include new parents. There is an unsubscribe link at the bottom of the newsletter for any families that do not wish to receive the newsletter. Challenges in the beginning included getting the newsletter translated, readable, and workable. Figuring out how to handle links to community resources that are not in Spanish or other languages continues to be a challenge and the team is still working on ways to translate the newsletter into other languages. The newsletter continues to be refined and streamlined. The May 2022 issue was the most successful yet as reported by a leader from a Spanish speaking parent organization “Just wanted to let you know that the ELPASO Voz-Lafayette Community Leaders sincerely appreciated receiving this month's newsletter in Spanish. We have heard from other parents in the community that they are happy to have received it as well.”

Producing the newsletter can be time-intensive and requires being aware of new and existing opportunities and resources in the community. The team found that they produced a better newsletter by offering it every other month. Advice to others would include keeping detailed notes about possible content and having regular sections to include in each issue. The team also found that each issue can have a disability focus with a variety of resources. This year they provided newsletters focused on autism, learning disabilities and intellectual/developmental disabilities. Next year they are working on a logo and hope to align with the district calendar and promote a variety of Disability Awareness Days as well as offer resources that all schools can use at their school events.

Staff-Wide Positive Phone Calls

Mesa Elementary School

Boulder, CO



Mesa Elementary School launched a Families and Educators Together (FET) team in the fall of 2021. One of the main goals of the team was to improve underrepresented families' sense of inclusion in the school community. As the team discussed potential ways for the entire staff to expand its efforts

to deepen partnerships with families, the idea quickly emerged of a positive phone call system that would include built-in time for staff to connect with dozens of families each month. Research has shown that positive calls are highly impactful in terms of both strengthening relationships between staff and families and in sparking academic gains for students. Additionally, the purpose of this effort was to give families the gift of unexpected positive communication about their children. There are multiple benefits to this, not the least of which is reaching and connecting with families who may feel less connected.

This initiative emerged from Mesa's FET team, which consisted of six parents (all from different countries of origin outside of the United States), four educators, and the school principal. In the winter, the team discussed the scope and details of launching a positive phone call system. The principal brought the idea to the staff in February and the effort launched in March.

Each staff member was asked to make three positive contacts a month from March through May during late start mornings or Thursday afternoons when the principal designated time for positive outreach in lieu of a faculty meeting. It was left to their discretion which students they recognized. They were encouraged to start calls with the friendly conversation starter, "I thought you should know..." Staff were entrusted to follow through with this responsibility and were not asked to complete a form or any other documentation. While staff was encouraged to make phone calls as the preferred method of communication, they were permitted to use other communications methods when unable to reach by phone.

The principal met with the leadership team to debrief the implementation of the practice in the spring. The feedback about the experience was universally positive. Some challenges included playing phone tag with parents or full voice mails which led to an email that may have been less personal. Some teachers also struggled to get into the habit of making the calls.

In the future it may be better to require everyone to make phone calls at the same time (e.g. during the trade-out faculty meeting). It was helpful for the principal to send a couple of reminders to staff each month and to continue to provide time for "share outs" about the experience. Likewise, the principal could model and participate (as it's every bit as rewarding for the principal), and Mesa intends to extend the practice to support staff (e.g. the custodian calling three families per month) to make it a true school-wide initiative.

Englewood Schools Family Resource Center

Englewood Schools

Englewood, CO



Englewood Schools is a small, suburban school district that serves approximately 2500 students pre-k through 12th grade. The district has a current free and reduced rate of fifty-five percent. Throughout the pandemic, the requests from our students and families for basic need items such as food and warm gear increased exponentially. These overwhelming needs led to the fast-tracking of the Englewood Schools Family Resource Center. The purpose of the Family Resource Center was to have a central location in the district where students and families could come to get supplies in addition to connecting with any additional resources that they may need. The Resource Center is set up like a store and regularly carries nonperishable food, hygiene items, baby supplies, school supplies, warm gear, and clothing. The center also receives wellness items such as jump ropes and bike helmets along with fun things to keep students engaged like books and board games. At the center, there is also a resource table where families can get connected to services in the community such as Arapahoe County's Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), Clothes to Kids of Denver, medical and dental support, and mental health service providers. In addition, the Family Resource Center is used as a hub for continuing family education and opportunities. The space has hosted Language Development Council for Multilingual Family Nights and serves as a space where McKinney Vento students and families can learn about programs that assist the unhoused.

The Englewood Schools Family Resource Center was established and is run by the District Family, School, and Community Liaison in partnership with the amazing donors from the Englewood community. The District McKinney Vento Liaison plays a role in servicing the district's unhoused students and families. Also, Englewood's Culturally Linguistically Diverse Education Family Liaison/District Translator is a fixture at the Resource Center on open house days.

Opening the Family Resource Center has had a tremendous effect on making sure that Englewood's most impacted students and families get the dedicated necessary resources to provide a level playing field amongst their peers. This support is needed to achieve equitable educational outcomes. For children, food insecurity and the lack of basic needs have been linked with a higher risk for adverse effects across multiple life domains, including a greater risk for lower academic performance (Feeding America, 2017; Winicki & Jemison, 2003) and negative health outcomes (Casey, et. al, 2005). The Family Resource Center provides students and families a space where they can get many of these needs met.

Englewood Schools Family Resource Center is new this school year. The district strives to make it the most accommodating and welcoming environment for students and families. There is constant communication between the staff that works out of the Resource Center with the stakeholders they serve. Discussions around items and resources needed as well as taking stock of what items are most frequently used help in the continual cycle of requesting and searching for new donations. One challenge that will be ongoing is the need for resources versus the donations that are received. Expanding partnerships and donors will be a continuous focus in order to sustain all resources and supplies.



Before starting to pursue a resource center, stakeholders should do a needs assessment to decide what types of resources and services they would like to provide and then make sure to have strong, long-lasting, viable partnerships in place.

Standard 3—Supporting Student Success
Essential Element 4—Dedicate Necessary Resources

Family Connect Program

Denver Public Schools

Denver, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education



The FACE Family Connect (FFC) program was developed in 2019 in response to a service gap identified by a team of school social workers in the Office of Family and Community Engagement.

With careers starting in the schools, social workers identified that a common problem seen in schools is that providing families with referrals does not necessarily lead to the intended outcome of a family connecting with the service, yet the resources needed to help families connect are limited. Many of the systems in place that “help” families are incredibly difficult to navigate, and families are not able to connect when they run up against systemic barriers.

The program model identifies participating schools through a DPS tiered support model which is a metric that prioritizes schools in terms of level of support needed. The program started with 29 schools and is now serving and capped at 44 schools based on the program’s capacity. Although case management referrals are limited to 44 schools, the program provides consultation and some single direct service support to every school in the district. Typically, families are identified by the schools. It was determined that the most effective referrals would come from the SSP’s (schools psychologists, nurses, social workers) and the school counselors as schools first provide school-based interventions prior to making a referral. District staff found that through their training, SSP’s and counselors could provide an accurate assessment of the family’s needs, resulting in more appropriate referrals and it ensured that every referral had a consistent point of contact.

Parents or guardians referred to the program fell into one or more of the following support categories: Basic Needs/Financial Support, Academic Access, Transition, Health/Mental Health, Disability, and Behavior and Parenting Support. Before a family is referred, they are notified of the intended referral. Once the family consents to the referral, the SSP makes a referral online and the FFC team (two social workers) contacts the school for more information and then contacts the family within 48 hours of receiving the referral.

The program is a home-based model in its ideal form as it allows for full engagement with the parents or guardians who have been referred, resulting in a deeper understanding of the family’s dynamics and environment, their strengths, current supports and identified needs. The program is strength-based and works with families on identifying and developing their own client-centered support goals. An important component of the program is the intention to help families achieve self-sufficiency which cannot be effectively achieved through a rescue mentality or a quick fix approach. Social workers focus on capacity building with the goal to help families build skills to prevent or handle further crises.

There are various tools used to evaluate the effectiveness of the FFC Program. One tool is a standardized self-sufficiency matrix which identifies where a family falls on the matrix in categories on a 1-10 scale ranging from crisis to thriving. Pre and post data is collected. Whether a client completes their goals is another metric used to evaluate program efficacy. The program also uses disaggregated data to determine whether the program is engaging clients of color as effectively as white participants, as well as reporting any inequity in outcomes across race/ethnicity. Finally, the program uses a satisfaction survey to assess whether schools feel we are adequately supporting them and their families. The program has received a multitude of positive feedback since its implementation in 2019 despite COVID disruptions to the program model. School-based professionals who are working directly with students have given consistent strong

Essential Element 3—Design Capacity Building Opportunities
Standard 3—Sharing Power



feedback on yearly satisfaction surveys. The two-year average quantitative scores range between 90-100% across all domains and voluntary qualitative feedback has been 100% positive.

As with any program there are challenges. One challenge is the lack of resources available to expand programming to appropriately support the needs of the racially and ethnically diverse community that the program serves. Another challenge is around supporting families who speak a first language other than English. During the 2021-22 program year, 22% of the families referred required services in another language. While DPS does have an interpretation line, being restricted to serving a family over the phone is counter to the program's best practices of meeting families in their home and being able to fully engage families to the fullest potential. The program has worked through this by recruiting bilingual support through the graduate social work programs at partnering universities, but experienced, full-time bilingual support is necessary to serve our bilingual community most effectively.

If someone were to replicate this practice, there are several program cornerstones that contribute to its success. Licensed social workers in the case management roles are logistically the best fit for the program based on their training and expertise in family systems and community work. Additionally, case managers who are familiar with school protocols, systems, and roles are essential in understanding how to best assist families within the defined program scope and can help families more fluently navigate some of the more complex internal systems. Having and communicating a well-defined scope including service exclusions is an important part of maintaining appropriate program boundaries. Collaboration is also key, so identifying point persons at each school is important as well as an emphasis on building trusting and strong relationships within the schools. Providing orientation to those who refer also greatly improves the quality of referrals and increases the number of referrals that fall within the scope of the program.

The program gives regular updates to those who refer to let them know when services are being closed and where the family may still need support. This not only allows for a stronger continuum of services for the family but demonstrates a level of customer service that promotes a strong collaborative partnership. Lastly, the ability to meet the client where they are at during the case management relationship is critical in helping them to meet successful outcomes. Tenacity in relationship building and using a variety of engagement strategies to meet the individual needs of the client as well as allowing the client to stay in the driver's seat and self-determine their own course are keys to building trust. Executing a non-judgmental approach and allowing families to determine the pace are just as important as the case manager's ability to dig deep for resources and maintain commitment to doing whatever is needed to help a client reach their goals.

Family Constituency Services

Denver Public Schools

Denver, CO



The Family Constituency Services team (FCS) is a unique and important team within Denver Public Schools (DPS). The FCS team is the hub where families, community, and schools can reach out for supports in many different areas. FCS Specialists manage the DPS Helpline, the main call center for the district where families can call and ask for complex supports as well as simple information such as school closures, family trainings, and other district related information. The team provides high-quality services to staff, families, and the community members who need assistance accessing school and district resources, addressing pressing concerns, and building skills to be strong advocates and partners in their students' education. The FCS Specialists support incoming calls both in English and Spanish but are also prepared to utilize Interpretation Services to communicate with all families. The FCS team offers trainings and workshops to schools and staff to strengthen communication and build positive school/family relationships on managing conflict, effective communication and high-quality services and de-escalation.

In supporting DPS families and schools, the FCS team's goals are:

1. Families and staff have a greater understanding of DPS policies and initiatives.
2. Families and staff are able to support and participate in a positive and equitable experience within our school community.
3. Families and staff are familiar with the helpline and its services.
4. Families and staff are able to work together more effectively to support student success.

All of team's interactions with families, staff, and communities are documented and tracked by school, network, and type of call. This allows staff to implement proactive measures to address the most common concerns and obtain the data to make appropriate recommendations to departments and school leadership.

Between the months of Aug. 2021 and March 2022 the FCS team received 8000+ phone calls through the FACE Helpline. During this same period, we facilitated 505 mediations to resolve school and family challenges. On a weekly basis the team receives 200-300 calls per week. The data also inform the district of top areas of concern types: bullying, safety, communication, discipline etc. Trends are monitored and used to identify specific schools and key areas of concern that supports can be created for targeted improvements.

In conclusion, DPS families and community members are always a call or email away from support or information they are in need of. DPS has FCS Specialists who follow up with families within 24 hours from when they initially made the call. FCS Specialists are dedicated in supporting families and community members to be able to support their children in having a successful school year.

Standard 3—Supporting Student Success
Essential Element 2—Build Trusting Relationships

Incredible Years-Dinosaur School & BASIC Parent Program

Early Learning Center at Gregory Hill

Westminster, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education



The Early Learning Center at Gregory Hill strives to prepare the whole child for success in elementary school. One of the goals is to empower parents with programs to be advocates for their children. Incorporating the Incredible Years program into the curriculum encourages and supports the home-school partnership. The Incredible Years promotes positive relationships between parent, teacher, and child. It improves academic success, reduces challenging behaviors, promotes positive and consistent discipline, and supports caregivers.

The Incredible Years offers different components which include Dinosaur School and the Preschool BASIC Parent Program. These programs foster the social emotional competence of children and promote academic success.

Dinosaur School is planned and implemented by trained teachers and staff members who co-lead lessons using puppets to target problem solving, self-regulation, anger management, and peer interactions. The BASIC Parent Program is facilitated by trained staff members who guide groups of parents as they learn strategies and skills that promote children's social competence and reduce challenging behaviors. Topics include how to play with their children, social/emotional, academic, and persistence skills coaching, effective praise, and the use of incentives. The Parent Program meets weekly for 14 sessions and the first half hour of each session begins with a shared meal. Each session is offered in both English and Spanish and childcare is provided.



Integrating both the Dinosaur School and the Preschool BASIC Parent Program fosters and supports a child's social emotional competence across environments. When implementing these components of the Incredible Years Program, parents gain information and tools to encourage the development of their child's skills. Parents are empowered to be advocates for their children which can positively impact their academic success.



In order to evaluate the program, the Dinosaur School teachers and BASIC Parent Program facilitators completed demographic information about themselves and their students and participants. In addition, the Dinosaur School teachers and the BASIC Parent Program participants completed a Social Competence Scale at the beginning and end of the program or school year. Observations and coaching were completed during both components of the Incredible Years program to support fidelity. During the 20-21 school year the team implemented these programs virtually. They found this to be challenging as they were not able to build deeper connections and parent's participation was limited.

Creating a strong home-school partnership during the early years of a child's development positively impacts student success. The team's advice to others when implementing the programs provided through the Incredible Years is it is important to do so with fidelity in order to see the most successful results. Following through with observations and coaching will provide the Dinosaur School teachers and the BASIC Parent Program facilitators with the support needed to create a successful home-school partnership.

Standard 3—Supporting Student Success

Essential Element 3—Design Capacity-Building Opportunities

Motheread/Fatheread Program

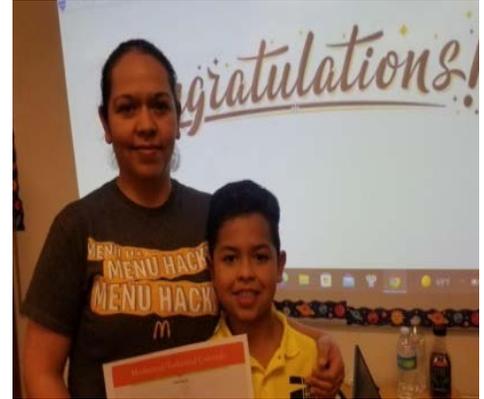
Madison Elementary School

Greeley, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

The Motheread/Fatheread Program is a program that is part of Colorado Humanities. The Motheread/Fatheread trains facilitators to work with parents and children in connecting with literature. The Greeley D6 Family Center was involved in the implementation of Madison’s reading program due to the family center hosting a little library with all the books the program uses. The family center was able to obtain most of the books used in the program for sessions and would lend them to Madison for the semester. The family center plans to keep the library open for other schools that want to implement this program.



Those involved in the implementation and planning of the practice were Diana Retana (parent and family advocate at Madison Elementary), Cari Pettyjohn (Curriculum Adaptation & Literacy Interventionist at Madison Elementary), Scott Filippini (Colorado Statewide Coalition), Janet Navarro (Title I Specialist at Family Center), David Reyes (Family Center Coordinator), and Karen Murphy (Motheread Program Coordinator). Diana implemented the program at her school along with

Cari. They gathered the families after school, once a week for a session. Each week, they would read a new book and complete an activity for that specific book. Diana explained, “the program is not just about reading, it’s about going more in depth with the books, and creating stronger bonds with each other. Being patient, re-reading if the child or parent forgets what the story is about and making the families feel welcomed.” Students were able to expand their vocabulary and cultivate their love of reading, which in turn benefited their reading assessment scores.

Some challenges included recruiting parents at the beginning of the year as parents were not comfortable yet and were very shy to participate. Slowly though, as the class progressed, participation increased. Madison Elementary would recommend the program 100% because it’s a way to connect with families while at the same time working on children’s learning and literacy skills. One piece of advice/recommendation would be to get more support from teachers and staff at the school to support recruitment.



Reading Bingo & Read To Me Events

Kullerstrand Elementary School

Westminster, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education



With everyone facing challenges around learning growth through the pandemic - Kullerstrand Vision Partnership Team decided to focus on supporting literacy to try and bridge the gap caused by the inconsistent learning environments of the past two years. The goal was to create learning opportunities around literacy in which families could play a role. The Kullerstrand Vision Partnership Team is comprised of administrators, teachers, parents, and other staff. The team worked together to create and implement the plan to, not only bring these learning experiences to the home, but to also make them fun and inviting for all to participate.

The team created both a monthly Reading Bingo that the kids and families complete at home over the month, and a monthly Read To Me Event with guest readers who came in to read to a class each month. Families were then invited to stay after the Read To Me Event to speak one on one with the instructional coach and reading specialist to get tips and ideas on how to best support their student at home. Between these two monthly events - over 300 books were given away to participating students. These practices helped to create a feeling of community where all parties played an important role in the education of Kullerstrand students. The enhanced sense of community is key to the positive school climate at Kullerstrand. The reading scores for Kullerstrand students have shown growth this year. This is due to the hard work of teachers and students and was supported by these enriching practices to help foster literacy at home, as well as at school.



The programs were evaluated monthly by the Vision Partnership Team. The team looked at participation rates and also discussed what was working well and what could be improved. The Reading Bingo had a 10% - 15% rate of participation consistently. It was decided that it was reaching enough families that it was worth continuing for the remainder of the year. The Read To Me Events were well attended by Kullerstrand families throughout the year. The feedback from those present was always positive.

If your school is interested in offering these enriching literacy opportunities to your families, one piece of advice would be to make sure to communicate with all parties involved with plenty of time prior to the event. It was important for the teachers to have their scheduled Read To Me date with enough time for them to plan. It was also important to communicate with the families to let them know they were invited to the events. The monthly Reading Bingo seemed to work better when it was sent home in paper form. It was still available for families digitally, but when it was sent home each month in paper form, the participation seemed a bit higher.

Asian Family Support Coordinator

Denver Public Schools

Denver, CO



In Denver Public Schools (DPS), the office of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) fosters a school community that is educated, engaged, and empowered to share the responsibility in creating thriving schools where Every Child Thrives. As a district, staff value and understand that engaging the families and communities across Denver is critical to students' learning and success. In 1990, DPS experienced challenges engaging with Asian families and students. School leaders began to look for support with their Asian families due to language and cultural barriers. In response, the district created a position to help families receive support and important information in their own language, support with navigating the DPS educational system, and most importantly, be heard. Today, the Asian Family Support Coordinator has been able to cultivate and implement many systems that support Asian families at the district, school, and community levels for over 30 years.



In DPS, any Asian family in the district can call, email, or text the Asian Family Support Coordinator with any questions or concerns. The Asian Family Support Coordinator then guides families via a warm handoff to the correct department, service, or organization, providing active communication with the family until the concern or question is resolved. The Asian Family Support Coordinator also makes sure to advocate for families by hosting focus groups in Vietnamese for families to ensure their voices and opinions are heard. Families feel more comfortable sharing their feedback and knowledge when this space is intentionally created. When COVID hit, the Asian Family Support Coordinator also supported families with learning how to navigate the technological elements of our day to day or the “new normal.”

The Asian Family Support Coordinator has also created capacity building opportunities and dedicated specific resources for the greater Asian community and their families by hosting Saturday Classes at Abraham Lincoln High School for the past 19 years. The Saturday classes are a multi-generational effort to support students and their families. Every Saturday, families can attend ESL classes, Citizenship classes, and Martial Arts. The Asian Family Support Coordinator is also housed at Abraham Lincoln Monday through Thursday afternoons for families to drop-in for personal support, as needed. The Asian Family Support Coordinator also partners with the community to do monthly videos and podcasts on important topics, as well as a monthly newsletter. Every month, the newsletter includes videos, community events, DPS events, and resources for families to have easy access in English and Vietnamese.

The Asian Family Support Coordinator position has had a positive impact on the DPS community, allowing families to feel more comfortable asking questions, sharing their feedback, and reaching out for support or guidance!

Standard 4—Speak Up for Every Child

Essential Element 3—Design Capacity Building Opportunities





Safe Summer Event Overland High School Aurora, CO



The goal of this practice was to provide Overland High School (OHS) students, families, and community members with resources and opportunities during the summer to keep busy and stay safe. The event helped build Family-School-Community Partnerships (FSCP). This practice follows Cherry Creek School District's (CCSD) goal of inclusive excellence and student well-being.

The individuals involved in planning and implementing the practice were Principal Sybil Booker, Community Liaison Sara Khatib, OHS Leadership Team, Councilman Juan Marcano, NAACP President Omar Montgomery, Sergeant Poole from APD, Aurora Gang Unit, and Arapahoe County Sheriff Tyler Brown. These individuals served as guest speakers at the event in addition to CCSD Security Coordinator Kevin Childs and building SRO's.

This practice entailed bringing various city of Aurora representatives and stakeholders to the same setting to discuss strategies to keep Overland and feeder schools' youth safe during the summer. Food and giveaways were provided to attendees. The guest speakers were purposefully selected to represent and reflect the diverse student body at Overland. OHS parents, students, and community members were invited to attend and participate. It was very important to include students to ask questions and lead discussions during the Q&A part of the event. The resources provided at the event included job and volunteer opportunities, mental health supports, city activities, and a safe place for parents to connect with both the school and community to share concerns and learn of school and city-wide initiatives to keep students safe. The organizations that attended the event were Arapahoe Parks/Recs, Arapahoe County, Aurora Library, Aurora Mental Health, Colorado Young Leaders (CYL), Compound of Compassion, and the Aurora City Youth Violence Prevention Program. Interpretation services were provided to all non-English speaking families.

The foremost challenge experienced during implementation was receiving feedback from both parents and students about what resources to provide at the event and what organizations to invite. Overland's liaison shared: "We were very cognizant to address Family-School-Community (FSC) needs by involving students and families while planning this event to ensure its effectiveness and success."

The advice that we would give someone wanting to replicate this practice is to understand that the needs of every family, school, and community are different. The most important aspect to integrate within FSCP is to treat all members with dignity and respect. FSCP is not only about the school extending support, but also receiving support from both families and the community. A fully functional FSCP is the oil of a properly functioning engine. One of the best quotes we relate our community navigation practices to is by Desmond Tutu, "we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in."

Special Education Advisory Council

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) has the longest running Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) in Colorado (since 2008). Modeled on the Colorado SEAC, most members are parents, but the advisory group also includes students, educators, district administrators, and community members. For the past five

years, Boulder's SEAC has become a strong advisory council offering recommendations to both special education and general education practices. The Council's mission is to actively represent children/youth with disabilities and impact decisions made on their behalf to enhance the quality of the educational services they receive.

BVSD SEAC is overseen by the district SEAC Coordinator and by the Special Education Executive Director. During the 2021-22 school year, the team included 17 members, with three sub-committees on inclusive practices, career readiness, and parent education. BVSD SEAC strives for a representational committee so that the group represents various geographic areas, student ages, student disabilities, and family structures and cultures. SEAC has an application process for membership and the main goal is to have members who understand that all students with Individual Education Program's (IEP) are represented. BVSD SEAC meets virtually five times a year and uses breakout groups and Google docs to capture our notes and recommendations. All recommendations must be aligned to the strategic themes and initiatives. At the final meeting, the team presents recommendations to all special education directors, as well as individuals from the superintendent's office. All materials are translated into Spanish and posted on the website.

Last year, one of the sub-committees addressed the gap from BVSD's decision to remove School Resource Officers. The executive director worked with the new director of the School Safety Advocates to review each SEAC recommendation and determine how it could be implemented. The new director updated SEAC at the first meeting of the year (September 2021) and asked for someone from that group to be on the hiring committee for school-based advocates. Council members have seen a decrease in 'discipline' with students with IEPs and fewer conflicts.

BVSD's SEAC Coordinate shares: "It took us a few years to be this effective in our advisory work. Being online has been a significant asset as it has removed many barriers to participation and reduced the length of meetings. Having shared Google docs has also allowed us to communicate effectively as well as provided a way for leaders to ask guiding questions. We are seeing our work implemented in a variety of departments and programs." One challenge is that the SEAC can only advise and make recommendations. The SEAC cannot decide or ensure implementation, so this work requires district leaders to value SEAC recommendations. Therefore, it is important to have an Executive Director that can ensure the recommendations have a person or department to receive them.

Standard 4—Speaking Up For Every Child
Essential Element 1—Create an Inclusive Culture

Family & Educators Together Parent Leadership Summit

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



The Family and Educator Together (FET) teams are equity-centered teams, focused on strengthening trust-based, reciprocal relationships between school staff and underrepresented families. They engage in meaningful dialogue that centers the voices of family members in ways that help educators discover more effective approaches to strengthening family-school-community partnerships and leads to the co-design of transformative action projects that create a more inclusive, collaborative, and equitable

school community. For the first time since FET was launched six years ago, we convened Spanish-speaking parent leaders across our participating schools for a full-day summit on May 14, 2022. The gathering focused on supporting families in cultivating leadership strategies, sharing successes and insights from their teams, exploring how the district can create more just schools, and honoring their experiences as parent leaders. Boulder Valley School District's (BVSD) Coordinator of Family Partnerships partnered with Denys Vigil and Ere Juarez, leaders from CARE, a parent leadership and advocacy organization that has offered extensive training in the past to Spanish-speaking families about how to navigate the U.S. school system and know their rights as family members. It felt vital to have the event co-planned and co-facilitated by leaders that families know and trust.

The summit was centered on asking questions to parent leaders that helped everyone learn each other's successes and insights from their experiences on FET teams. Participants shared their team's action projects and answered questions about their positive and negative experiences within their children's schools, which we captured in writing and provided rich insights to share back with school teams and district leaders. They learned more about their rights as parents and examined data on achievement and opportunity gaps that consistently impact Latino students. In the afternoon, we held a World Café in which they discussed in small groups questions such as, "Why do Latino families sometimes feel silenced or invisible in our schools?" and "What are some concrete ways that we can make FET gatherings more meaningful for families?" Parent leaders also completed a detailed survey about their experiences in their children's schools and engaged in whole group conversations around next steps for their teams and the district as a whole to create more equitable schools. The summit concluded with each participant receiving a certificate and a plaque reminding them of the transformative power of their voices.

Participants completed a robust summit evaluation that provided detailed information about what they enjoyed about the summit as well as helpful ideas on how we can improve it in future years. Additionally, the co-facilitators spent time in the summer months crafting an extensive report that highlighted parent insights from the summit and related data. This report was shared at a gathering with district leadership as well as with leaders of FET teams in August. The most challenging part of putting together the summit were the hundred plus phone calls made to potential participants and unexpected construction near the school site where the summit was held.

The facilitation team's advice to others wanting to replicate this practice would be that it is worth all of the time invested because one day of insights can inform next steps for individual schools and the district for the entire next school year. Also, it is beneficial to provide participants with note catchers and use other approaches (i.e. chart papers) so that the wisdom of family members can be fully captured. As one parent shared as we discussed next steps to improve our schools' effort to support underrepresented families, "We can't give up; FET has what we need, and we are not alone."

Standard 5—Sharing Power

Essential Element 2—Build Trusting Relationships

Parent Panel
Louisville Middle School
Louisville, CO



The vision around hosting a professional learning session in which staff could learn from a panel of Latino parents was born from an innate desire for BVSD professionals to understand the perspective of families. BVSD staff want to push forward for all families and to do so, staff recognize the need to know families' stories and desires.

The Families and Educators Together (FET) co-chairs identified four parents from the team that were interested in participating on the panel. They realized that due to parent work schedules it would not be possible for the participants to join the PD session in person, so one of the FET leaders interviewed each parent and wove the clips together into a single recording. Staff watched the virtual panel in a professional learning session in early April and shared their reflections both verbally and in writing. After viewing the panel, the FET leaders and another colleague led a brief training on implementing the TalkingPoints app to enhance communication between the staff and families.

The parents on the panel spoke about their experiences at school and both positive strides and changes that were still needed to create a stronger bridge between the school and Latino families. For instance, one mother said, "We have a lot of work to continue to do regarding communication. Some teachers are still sending emails in English. I think that is a way in which we could improve as a school." This dovetailed nicely into the second part of the PD which was focused on training staff around using the app TalkingPoints, which translates text messages between staff and families. As a father on the panel put it, "There is a tension that exists between us, and the tension is language. But when that breaks down and we find each other more, it's great."

After the staff watched the parent panel, the teacher leader asked them to reflect in writing on what they noticed, what surprised them, what they already are doing in their teaching practice that is positively reinforced, and what they might consider adding or changing based on the thoughts of the panelists. It was clear that the staff had taken away several insights on both how to better connect with families and how to improve their teaching. Staff mentioned, "I can be better at communicating with all families" and needing to "honor diversity among the Latino community."

The power and impact of the panel was reflected in the depth and breadth of insights shared by staff after viewing the panel and the questions they posed to ask families at future FET gatherings, such as as, "How could you feel more connected to non-Spanish speaking staff?" and "Do your students feel like they are a part of our school and community? Or do they feel like observers/outside?" The practice was high level and pushed the staff's thinking forward. A problem of practice, however, continues to be engaging all families of students- especially those where connection is most needed in order to foster belonging.

To replicate this practice, you will need champions of this work who have a passion for engaging families in partnership work. Persistence is key as families need to know they are safe, there is mutual trust and respect, and that we are here for them. In reflecting on the parent panel and the steps taken earlier in the year to bring forth parent voices, the school's principal shared, "Before FET started, we saw this glaring need to connect with more families. For me, it has been very meaningful to be in the room to hear parents' stories, see how much diversity we have in our Spanish-speaking community, and feel connected in an authentic way."

Wheat Ridge Articulation Group

Jeffco Public Schools

Wheat Ridge, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Jefferson County Schools had a mantra for the 2021-22 school year; “Better Together.” The Wheat Ridge Articulation Schools Family Engagement Liaisons took that to heart and set a goal to create a Family Learning Series for all families in the Wheat Ridge area. The goal of the series was to bring families from different schools together in a fun learning environment. All elementary schools, the middle school and the high school were invited to participate in this effort. The team met in the fall of 2021 to start the planning process.



Four different Learning Series Events were held throughout the school year at different schools. Each event had a specific focus with three different learning opportunities for families centered around the main topic. It was the hope of the group to positively impact family involvement in student learning by supporting the adults with information pertinent to their child’s education. It was an important aspect to have families together in a social setting since there was no option for that type of involvement in the previous years due to the pandemic. It was also a chance to include community members in our school focused events. The first event focused on Technology, the second was around Mental Health Challenges, the third created Toolkits for Families (restorative practices, love and logic, etc.), and the fourth was on Health (physical, mental, and nutrition).



The last event was the most successful. It was formatted as The Amazing Race. Families received a race card upon entry and received a stamp when they completed a challenge. There was a Supermarket Sweep Challenge that taught about nutrition (families had to ‘shop’ for foods to make a healthy meal for under \$12), an Obstacle Course (focusing on fun ways to stay physically fit), and the Mental Health challenge included a jeopardy type game. Families also explored Self Care Booths (staffed by community members) and then made a Self-Care Plan for their family. There were also give a ways and prizes at the end of each event.

The group met after each event to evaluate and brainstorm how to make it better. There were several challenges such as the first event being scheduled at the same time as another big event at the school, however, the Family Learning Series was able to piggyback on the more established event. One event was also canceled due to covid numbers, and another was held virtually due to covid numbers.

Working together with other schools may seem overwhelming, but it really helped us provide great trainings for our families that we would not have been able to do as easily as one school working alone. It seemed to work out best, and draw the most families, when it was a hands-on experience for the family to do together (like the Amazing Race).



Community Liaison Sagebrush Elementary School Aurora, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

As a Title I school, Sagebrush’s vision is to build an environment in which every student will thrive socially, emotionally, and academically as they are prepared to make a positive impact on the world. This vision sparked a need to create opportunities for families to engage with the school in a way that builds and strengthens relationships and connects them with the necessary resources to be successful. In partnership with school administration, the Family Liaison, and the school’s staff, plans were crafted to address the physical, emotional, and financial needs of the student body and community. Through various events and volunteer opportunities Sagebrush was able to show up in a very real way for its students.

The first endeavor of the year was to connect families with resources that addressed the financial strain that a majority of families were feeling. To accomplish this, volunteers collected food, clothing, and hygiene items. A food pantry was then constructed, and families were invited to select food that met their family’s dietary needs as well as other personal items. The response from the community far exceeded expectations as donations kept rolling in throughout the year.



Winter holidays are often a time for celebrating with families and an opportunity to slow down and enjoy loved ones. However, this time of year can also cause stress for families. Through a coordinated effort with a neighboring school, Sagebrush launched a present drive. Numerous donations and countless volunteer hours by members of the staff and community led to the collection of approximately 600 gifts which provided over 60 families with holiday assistance.



Access to quality food and education is something many families lack. Through a partnership with the Cooking Matters at Home organization, families received fresh ingredients and tips for cooking nutritious meals. These classes encouraged all members of a family to participate and share in the fun as well as build relationships with neighboring families.

Families have multiple needs that cover a wide variety of topics. To provide families with information about general safety practices, ways to connect with the school, and resources for addressing academic, mental, economic, and physical health needs, staff created a virtual resource center. This resource proved to be very valuable as its platform connected families with much needed services within the community.



Each of these practices were evaluated by continual communication from families through digital surveys to ensure that the school’s response remained relative and consistent to the families it serves. Overall, the success of the programs at Sagebrush was largely dependent on staff and community participants volunteering time and energy. Therefore, it is important to establish a relationship and a partnership with the community early on. Sagebrush’s family liaison shared: “Our advice would be to not be afraid to ask for what you want and need; chances are you will be the voice for those who are afraid to speak.”

Standard 6—Collaborating with the Community
Essential Element 4—Dedicate Necessary Resources

Mission Viejo Community Financial Literacy Night

Mission Viejo Elementary

Aurora, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Mission Viejo Elementary held a Financial Literacy Night on May 5, 2022. The purpose was to promote and educate members of the community and school about the importance of personal financial literacy.

The event was spearheaded by one of the fourth-grade teachers. He had a positive “yes” from the principal and then had the help of many individuals from local businesses and individuals in the Cherry Creek School District. Mission Viejo’s PTCO and the Cherry Creek Schools Foundation were instrumental in the success of the event due to their generous donations.

The evening began with dinner for families, followed by introductions, announcements, and the keynote speaker. The keynote speaker is a huge advocate for financial literacy and provided a great message. The evening also had speakers including the President of Global Children Financial Literacy Foundation and an education director at Economic Literacy. The event was then split into breakout rooms. Each breakout room was led by a guest speaker with different financial information for the attendees to explore. There was also a student only breakout room, allowing past and present students to engage which provided a positive school climate for our school and community.

Mission Viejo Community Financial Literacy Night! May 5, 2022

Order of Events:

- 5:00-5:45—Dinner Catered by Tacos La Morentia
- 5:45-6:00—Transition to Gym
 - 6:00-6:20—Welcome & Keynote Speech: Mr. Ryan Harris
- 6:20-6:30—Transition to Breakout Session #1
- 6:30-7:00—Breakout Session #1
- 7:00-7:05—Transition to Breakout Session #2
- 7:05-7:35—Breakout Session #2
 - 7:35-7:45—Return to Gym
- 7:45-8:00—Closing Remarks & Door Prizes

Breakout Sessions:

Financial Wellness-Mandy Cakir-District Credit Union

In this session you will learn about the importance of budgeting and saving. We will look at how to create a budget, different savings account options, ways to save and much more!

Investing Wisely-Prince Dykes-G.C.F.L.F

In this session, you will explore how to get started investing in our current economy.

Small Business & Entrepreneurship-Steven Cartwright-Key Bank

In this session, you will find out what the basic steps are when you start a new business, as well as available resources to help get you started.

Credit & Financing Options-Jay LeBlanc-Econ Lit CO

In this session, you will discover how your credit score impacts your financial well-being. Additionally, you will gain an understanding of a variety of financing options.

Preparing for Life After High School-Charles Kastens

This session is designed for both students and parents. The purpose of this session is to stress the importance of building human capital and share some tips and strategies how to not only save for college, but complete it in a more affordable manner.

The practice was evaluated by the parents and students that attended (85) along with the 10 businesses that participated and set up booths for the evening. Like most events, the biggest challenge was getting the event recognized and advertised to achieve maximum attendance and to help all those involved.

The advice we would give to someone wishing to replicate the event is to know what your community is interested in and build an event around that. Include people that are knowledgeable and engaging in the topic surrounding the event. As one of our teachers stated, “No matter what our students grow up to be – a doctor, a teacher, a mechanic, or stay-at home mom – everybody has got to know how to manage their finances.”

Spellbinder Storytellers

Denver Public Schools

Denver, CO



Spellbinders Storytellers mission is to use the art of oral storytelling to enhance literacy, encourage character development, and build intergenerational community. DPS' Storytelling program brings together young and old to create connections, advance literacy, and enrich the lives of children and volunteers alike.

In 1988, to promote intergenerational programs, a group of senior citizens from the community trained in the art of storytelling by professional storytellers and told stories in elementary school classrooms. DPS Volunteer Services sponsors monthly professional development workshops to train new and existing volunteer storytellers to enhance their storytelling skills. In 1997, Spellbinders became a Colorado non-profit corporation with the goal of establishing Spellbinders volunteer storytelling "chapters" around the country.

Oral storytellers volunteer in classrooms – telling, not reading stories. Tellers provide 20 to 40-minute storytelling sessions based on the needs of the teacher. Tellers return each month so that children form long-term relationships with caring community members. Storytellers offer a fun, engaging, and effective tool for literacy skill building.



Become Part of
Denver Spellbinders

Listening and speaking are core skills that cross all content areas. Oral storytelling requires students to visualize and imagine. This supports reading comprehension and evokes critical thinking skills which are essential to all higher learning. Stories include tales from around the world that expand a child's worldview. Fables and folktales that evoke grit, resiliency, and perseverance as they show dragons can indeed be slain and that heroes and heroines can come from the most unlikely places.



The program is evaluated by surveying teachers at the end of the school year. Approximately 98% of teachers report that having a Spellbinders storyteller in the classroom helps students achieve academic goals. Almost 90% of teachers also agree that Spellbinder storytellers help students build key skills in vocabulary, listening, imagination, creativity, and expand students' worldview and improve

reading scores.

Volunteers attend a series of four, 3-hour trainings. Attendance at all four sessions is required to gain certification as a Spellbinders Storyteller. Recruiting new storytellers willing to commit to the lengthy training has proved to be challenging. The program is one of our most popular, impactful programs with educators and volunteers in the district. It's worth the time and effort!

The Overland Giving Pantry

Overland High School

Aurora, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

The goal of this practice was to restructure ancient school practices that were originally built on predominately White Family-School-Community Partnerships (FSCP) into more inclusively diverse FSCP to meet the needs of all students and aid in their academic success. This practice builds upon Cherry Creek School District's (CCSD) goal of inclusive excellence and student well-being.

Thanks to the EASI Connect for Success Grant from the Colorado Department of Education, Overland was able to hire Sara Khatib as a Community Liaison at Overland High School (OHS). Through school, district, and community partnerships, Overland has been able to serve over 150 families monthly with food needs. Students and staff members, interested in gaining volunteer experience, helped distribute goods to families while also building strong positive relationships with Overland community members.



Multiple avenues were available to stock the Giving Pantry, including community donations. The organization Metro Caring was also able to provide boxed goods that parents could grab and go when needed. In addition to an on-site food pantry, a SECOR Cares collaboration was also in place to serve the Overland community every first Wednesday of the month. The SECOR mobile food truck provided great options of meat, fruit/vegetables, bread, canned goods, and sanitary products that families were able to shop with pride and hand select. Not only does the Giving Pantry provide food, but it also supplies shoppers with at home hygiene supplies, blankets, socks, books, board games, and various school supplies that ultimately aid in student mental health well-being and high academic achievement.

The foremost challenge experienced during implementation was reaching out to parents and notifying them about the Giving Pantry and how to access it. The practice was evaluated by both parents and students by providing feedback on what options the pantry should provide and modifications to make the pantry more accessible.

For more information and
partnering materials:

SACPIE

www.cde.state.co.us/sacpie

CDE

cde.state.co.us/familyengagement

Questions

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State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education



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