



# Promising Partnerships Practices

---

# 2023

---

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

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

<b>Ambassadors Program.....</b>			<b>2</b>
<i>Standard 1: Welcoming All Families</i>	<i>Essential Element 1: Create an Inclusive Culture</i>	<i>Level: Elementary</i>	
<b>Chili and Board Games Night.....</b>			<b>3</b>
<i>Standard 1: Welcoming All Families</i>	<i>Essential Element 2: Build Trusting Relationships</i>	<i>Level: Elementary</i>	
<b>Cooking with Families.....</b>			<b>4</b>
<i>Standard 1: Welcoming All Families</i>	<i>Essential Element 1: Create an Inclusive Culture</i>	<i>Level: Secondary</i>	
<b>Family Night.....</b>			<b>6</b>
<i>Standard 1: Welcoming All Families</i>	<i>Essential Element 2: Build Trusting Relationships</i>	<i>Level: Secondary</i>	
<b>Family Principal Chats.....</b>			<b>7</b>
<i>Standard 1: Welcoming All Families</i>	<i>Essential Element 2: Build Trusting Relationships</i>	<i>Level: Elementary</i>	
<b>Home Visits.....</b>			<b>8</b>
<i>Standard 1: Welcoming All Families</i>	<i>Essential Element 2: Build Trusting Relationships</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Safe Trick or Treat Night.....</b>			<b>9</b>
<i>Standard 1: Welcoming All Families</i>	<i>Essential Element 1: Create an Inclusive Culture</i>	<i>Level: Secondary</i>	
<b>Academic Updates via Text.....</b>			<b>10</b>
<i>Standard 2: Communicating Effectively</i>	<i>Essential Element 2: Build Trusting Relationships</i>	<i>Level: Secondary</i>	
<b>Co-Created FAQ Document.....</b>			<b>11</b>
<i>Standard 2: Communicating Effectively</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: Elementary</i>	
<b>FSCP Presentations.....</b>			<b>12</b>
<i>Standard 2: Communicating Effectively</i>	<i>Essential Element 2: Build Trusting Relationships</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>ILA Interpretation/Translation Devices.....</b>			<b>13</b>
<i>Standard 2: Communicating Effectively</i>	<i>Essential Element 1: Create an Inclusive Culture</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Talking Points.....</b>			<b>14</b>
<i>Standard 2: Communicating Effectively</i>	<i>Essential Element 2: Build Trusting Relationships</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>AMPED Nights.....</b>			<b>15</b>
<i>Standard 3: Supporting Student Success</i>	<i>Essential Element 4: Dedicate Necessary Resources</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Family Connect Program.....</b>			<b>17</b>
<i>Standard 3: Supporting Student Success</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Glow Crazy for Literacy and Math!.....</b>			<b>19</b>
<i>Standard 3: Supporting Student Success</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: Elementary</i>	



<b>Learning Sessions.....</b>			<b>21</b>
<i>Standard 3: Supporting Student Success</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: Elementary</i>	
<b>Parent Academy for Student Success (PASS).....</b>			<b>22</b>
<i>Standard 3: Supporting Student Success</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Parent Academy.....</b>			<b>23</b>
<i>Standard 3: Supporting Student Success</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>PBIS Family Night.....</b>			<b>24</b>
<i>Standard 3: Supporting Student Success</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: Elementary</i>	
<b>SEL Workshops: Lovely Feelings en Familia.....</b>			<b>25</b>
<i>Standard 3: Supporting Student Success</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: Elementary</i>	
<b>Test-Taking Family Partnership Strategies.....</b>			<b>26</b>
<i>Standard 3: Supporting Student Success</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: Elementary</i>	
<b>Compass Committee &amp; the Instructional Review Process.....</b>			<b>28</b>
<i>Standard 4: Speaking Up for Every Child</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Listening Circles.....</b>			<b>30</b>
<i>Standard 4: Speaking Up for Every Child</i>	<i>Essential Element 1: Create an Inclusive Culture</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Parenting Partners.....</b>			<b>32</b>
<i>Standard 4: Speaking Up for Every Child</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Community Advisory Groups.....</b>			<b>34</b>
<i>Standard 5: Sharing Power</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Family Transition to Middle School Parent Panels.....</b>			<b>35</b>
<i>Standard 5: Sharing Power</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: Secondary</i>	
<b>Parent and Family Advocates.....</b>			<b>37</b>
<i>Standard 5: Sharing Power</i>	<i>Essential Element 4: Design Dedicate Necessary Resources</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Principal Chats.....</b>			<b>38</b>
<i>Standard 5: Sharing Power</i>	<i>Essential Element 2: Build Trusting Relationships</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>TWIGS Family Engagement Program.....</b>			<b>39</b>
<i>Standard 5: Sharing Power</i>	<i>Essential Element 2: Build Trusting Relationships</i>	<i>Level: Secondary</i>	
<b>Collaborating with the Englewood Chamber of Commerce.....</b>			<b>40</b>
<i>Standard 6: Collaborating with the Community</i>	<i>Essential Element 4: Dedicate Necessary Resources</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Collaboration with Flying Pig Farm.....</b>			<b>42</b>
<i>Standard 6: Collaborating with the Community</i>	<i>Essential Element 4: Dedicate Necessary Resources</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Community Partnerships at Hamilton Middle School.....</b>			<b>43</b>
<i>Standard 6: Collaborating with the Community</i>	<i>Essential Element 4: Dedicate Necessary Resources</i>	<i>Level: Secondary</i>	

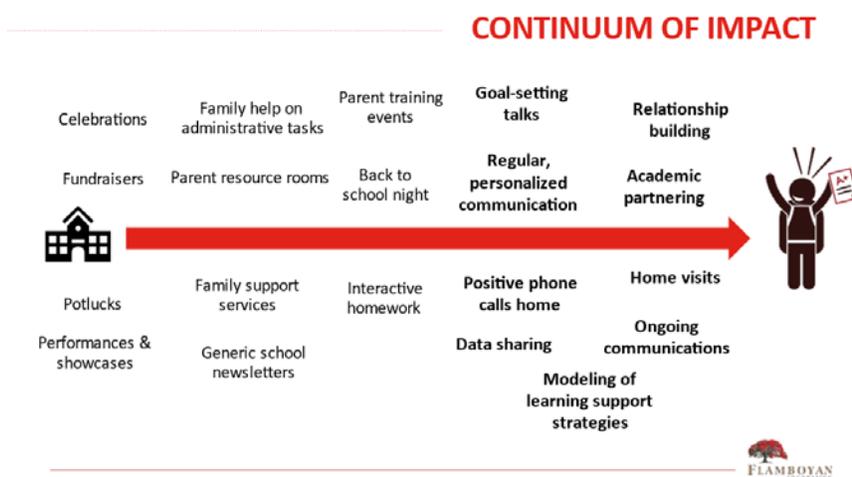
<b>D49 Community Resource Center</b> .....			<b>45</b>
<i>Standard 6: Collaborating with the Community</i>	<i>Essential Element 4: Dedicate Necessary Resources</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Elevate Englewood Collaboration</b> .....			<b>46</b>
<i>Standard 6: Collaborating with the Community</i>	<i>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity-Building Opportunities</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Family Center</b> .....			<b>48</b>
<i>Standard 6: Collaborating with the Community</i>	<i>Essential Element 4: Dedicate Necessary Resources</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Husky Hub</b> .....			<b>49</b>
<i>Standard 6: Collaborating with the Community</i>	<i>Essential Element 4: Dedicate Necessary Resources</i>	<i>Level: Elementary</i>	
<b>International Night: A Community Celebration</b> .....			<b>50</b>
<i>Standard 6: Collaborating with the Community</i>	<i>Essential Element 1: Create an Inclusive Culture</i>	<i>Level: Secondary</i>	
<b>Meetings with Weld County Child Welfare</b> .....			<b>51</b>
<i>Standard 6: Collaborating with the Community</i>	<i>Essential Element 4: Dedicate Necessary Resources</i>	<i>Level: District</i>	
<b>Summer Resource Fair</b> .....			<b>52</b>
<i>Standard 6: Collaborating with the Community</i>	<i>Essential Element 4: Dedicate Necessary Resources</i>	<i>Level: Elementary</i>	

# Introduction

The State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) are pleased to share this ninth 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 40 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 collaborating with the community—particularly schools intentionally collaborating within their feeder or articulation area. This edition of *Promising Partnership Practices* also have a greater representation of rural schools, though we’d still like to see many more included in future publications. 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 the majority of 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

# Ambassadors Program

## Escuela Bilingüe Pioneer School

### Lafayette, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education



The Covid-19 pandemic led many families to feel they lacked access to their child's school, creating a separation that had not been there before. Escuela Bilingüe Pioneer, a 90/10 dual immersion bilingual school, wanted to create a pathway for recruiting more families and allowing families to feel a greater sense of community, once enrolled. The goal was for families to not feel reluctant or intimidated to engage with school staff. Last year, several Families and Educators Together (FET) moms who had moved here from another country emphasized the value of having a sisterhood and community. While they loved the FET team, they articulated that they wished they had been included and welcomed from the beginning. This revealed that the school could do much better with how they welcomed and engaged families new to the school and new to the country. This led to the Ambassadors Program.

The Ambassadors Program consisted of four major components: creating a brochure to help all families know the important aspects of the school, creating a welcome video, identifying interested FET parents who could commit to making phone calls to welcome new families when they arrived, and developing parent-led tours for new families. This model, while still in early phases, takes the load off staff and empowers parent leadership.

Ambassadors play an important role as they share information with families about the school in a direct and personal way. They provide informational resources and contact information via the brochure and help connect families with the school community liaison to receive access to other programs and opportunities. Ambassadors are approved volunteers, mostly parents, that receive training shadowing the school community liaison as the liaison provides tours to new families. Once the ambassadors are comfortable, they start leading their own tours. The ambassador school tour runs throughout the school year and is available for new and current families that would like to visit and/or become familiar with the school building and facilities. The ambassadors also make sure every new family joining the school receives a call to make them feel welcome and part of the school community. As of now, there are three volunteers (including bilingual members) that have expressed interest in serving as ambassadors for the upcoming school year, but the program is open to any parent that would like to participate. The hope is that the Ambassadors Program helps new and current families feel connected to the rest of the Pioneer community and cultivates a supportive relationship among students, parents, and staff.

The program is too new for a full evaluation just yet. However, the welcome video has been a valuable tool for recruiting families for FET teams and helping new families, particularly Spanish speaking families, feel their language and culture is valued. The brochure helps increase enrollment during a time when district-wide enrollment continues to decline. The program can be further evaluated for success by how many new families enroll. Next year, the FET team will interview some of the new parents and ask them to provide feedback on the tour and if there is any missing information from the four components. One challenge is to ensure student privacy and confidentiality as the program relies on parents reaching out to other parents.

For the Ambassadors Program to be effective, compile a group of people with a strong sense of community. Provide potential volunteers with a clear description of responsibilities and have a process to select and train ambassadors. When creating the welcome video make sure the video centers parent voices. Cultivate or identify a few parent leaders who are passionate about taking this on. Lastly, take the time to support the parent leaders in feeling comfortable and confident before they lead tours and make phone calls independently. Be very thoughtful in how to scaffold support for parent success.

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

# Chili & Board Games Night

## Academy ACL

### Colorado Springs, CO



The annual Chili and Board Game Night at the Academy for Advanced & Creative Learning (ACL) seeks to build partnerships with families and allow families to see the value of board games in building creative thinking and math and logic skills.

The school partnered with the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) to arrange board games throughout the building while also holding a chili cook off. The event is held in late January or early February every year. Families can enter their chili into a cook off with prizes organized by the PTA. Each grade level volunteers one or more of their rooms to host different types of games (cards, strategy, logic, classic, etc.). Teachers and staff also wear fun costumes to promote the event and families are free to join in the games in all the classrooms.

A few challenges included getting families through the chili lines. Next year the event will utilize dual lines to help expedite the process. There was also a very large interest in bingo and more families than expected wanted to enter the bingo room. Next year, bingo will be moved to a larger room to accommodate the interest.

For those wishing to replicate this event, promote the event for at least a month before. While the concept seems straightforward, families can still struggle to understand what games their kids could play. Provide recommendations based upon age and development. Also - oversized games are fun for smaller kids especially. Lastly, to keep costs low in the beginning, ask families to bring their favorite games to share.

# Cooking with Families

## Poudre High School

### Fort Collins, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Poudre High School has utilized Cooking with Families over the last four years to create a more inclusive and welcoming culture for all families. Initially the program was held in a school member's home; the program has since expanded and takes place in the school kitchen.



The Poudre High School community believes student success is related not only to grades and graduate rates, but also to how connected, supported, and motivated students feel. Students feel most comfortable in a safe learning environment with teachers and staff that are open-minded and aware of diversity and inclusion. Poudre High School has the largest enrollment of Hispanic students within the Poudre School District. Cooking with Families was created to provide an inclusive and family friendly atmosphere. The program provides community members (students, staff, families, etc.) with the opportunity to volunteer, learn, and express respect for the



Hispanic culture and their cooking traditions. A volunteer from the Hispanic community teaches other members of the school community how to cook a complete meal from their country. During this event, students from Poudre High School and other family members take time to talk about their country and why the dish they are teaching others to prepare is important to them.

The Family Liaison partnered with the Assistant Principal, Activity Director, and the Family Consumer Sciences Department to implement the program. The Family Liaison contacts students and families that are interested in volunteering and works with them to select a menu from their country that they would like to prepare (i.e., beverage, appetizer, entree, and dessert). These details, along with the date and time of the event, are emailed out to all members of the school community. The Family Liaison then meets with the volunteer to create a budget and buy all the needed ingredients and materials for the event. The day of the event, a family style table is set up to serve the meal. The volunteer introduces the participating community members to facts about their country as well as the meal they are preparing. The volunteer then leads the community in various steps and rotating stations to prepare the meal. Once complete, the community celebrates and eats together. They present a gift card and thank you note to the volunteer, expressing gratitude for sharing their culture.



Students and families who have participated in the program mentioned how much more comfortable they feel at school knowing school members are open to learning about their culture and value their culture and traditions. The program has also allowed students to feel more comfortable communicating with their teachers and allowed various members of the community to interact with each other, who may not have otherwise. Teachers and staff who have participated in the program mentioned how much they value the time invested with their students. They appreciate learning about

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

their students' culture and traditions and enjoy having the ability to step back from their professional roles and learn and engage with their students and families.



Helpful tips for those who wish to replicate this program include being aware of attendees' allergies and intolerances to help create an inclusive menu that everyone can enjoy. The program can be flexibly held at school or other community members' homes. To help commemorate the event over the years, as well as include others who do not have the chance to participate, consider creating a recipe book for attendees and the school community.

# Family Night

## Platte Valley Middle School

### Kersey, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Platte Valley Middle School staff have hosted a Family Night for well over a decade. The event started with an academic focus; however, attendance was low. Around 2017, the practice morphed to include a fun element, a meal, and then a conversation around a more serious topic (i.e., bullying prevention, mental health, Colorado Academic Standards). Attendance was high for the fun activity and community meal, but families left before the conversation. In 2019, staff changed



the activity again to focus on dinner and fun, with no ulterior motive other than building relationships between students, their families, and staff. Family Night at Platte Valley Middle School is all about Fun, Food, and Fellowship.

While the PBIS team at the school takes the lead on the event, it is a whole-school effort. Teams of content specialists each run a different activity, all based on the evening's theme. Family Night themes have included Winter Olympics and Country Western. Groups of teachers run BINGO, dodge ball, have a cake walk, and oversee a photo booth. During the Winter Olympics night, the band teacher, who is an avid hockey fan, brought in a goalie and students and their families practiced making shots on goal. In the past, Family Nights have also included a passport for families to get a stamp for each content area or activity. Family Night happens in different months each year. This year, school staff held Family Night on the same night as the fourth quarter Parent Teacher Conferences, as attendance at conferences in the fourth quarter is traditionally low. The staff hoped to boost attendance by holding conferences first, followed by a meal and Family Night. Staff also raffled two \$200 King Soopers gift cards. Families received one raffle ticket for attending conferences and another raffle ticket for attending Family Night. Family Night is advertised through the Remind app, the school website, and in weekly parent updates from the principal and teachers.



Family Night creates a positive school experience in which parents can interact with their middle schoolers and get to know their children's teachers. Over the years, scheduling has been a challenge. Platte Valley must coordinate with other schools in the district to make sure that families are not double-booked. Student and family attendance is the primary method used to evaluate the success of the program.

Advice offered to schools hoping to utilize family nights include not getting too caught up in the desire to tie academics to the event. Academics has its place; however, what makes this practice so beneficial is that there is no academic focus. Family Nights are a time for relationship building and parents and kids having fun with their teachers and school community.



Standard 1 — Welcoming All Families  
Essential Element 2 — Build Trusting Relationships

# Family Principal Chats

## James Madison STEAM Academy

### Greeley, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

One of the goals at Madison Elementary (Now James Madison STEAM Academy) during the 2022-2023 school year was to implement Family Principal Chats. The Parent and Family Advocate, Principal, Assistant Principal, School Counselor, Family Center staff, and teachers all worked together to organize the Family Principal Chats. The Parent and Family Advocate helped contact families and get the word out about the chats.



Four chat meetings were held during the school year, with participation and attendance improving after each session. The goal of each session was to welcome all participants, build relationships, make families comfortable, answer questions, and provide information. One of the activities during a chat was “Get to Know Each Other” (i.e., where you are from? What do you like? How many children you have? Why you are here?). Families and staff both participated in the activity to increase communication and allow for community building. During the chats, staff and families also had small group discussions. This helped ensure all parent and family voices were heard and parents were very open to participating.



The theme of the last chat that parents advocated for was Social Emotional Support. Families discussed and received information on how to support their children’s ability to solve conflict and what it means to be a friend including using tone of voice, empathy, and body language. This chat was full of emotions and self-reflections. Parents also learn ways to maintain an emotional balance between their children and themselves.

The Parent and Family Advocate at Madison highly recommends schools implement these types of meetings. For those who would like to utilize Family Principal Chats, solicit information from parents regarding what topics or themes they would like to talk about. Lastly, encourage all staff to participate. The school community is valuable and building relationships among families and staff is essential.



# Home Visits

## District 49

### Colorado Springs, CO



School District 49 currently serves approximately 1500 English Language Learner (ELL) students. The goal of the home visit program was to support newcomer families with navigating the school system and to be the bridge between the school/district and the family. Another goal was to help students be successful not just academically, but in all aspects of their acclimation to the community, including socially and emotionally. If the school and family work together, then this success will be optimized.

The CLDE Family Liaisons worked in conjunction with school staff such as classroom teachers, CLDE teachers, and school counselors to collaborate and determine needs and the best form of support. Once the team learned more about the family, communicated with the family, and determined specific needs, the team then worked to acquire resources for the family. These ranged from basic need resources such as food and clothing, to academic or mental health support such as tutoring, homework support, credit recovery, connections to mental health organizations, etc.

The team often referenced resources already accessible such as tutoring through the school, public library, the in-district Community Resource Center, or through a community partner such as a church. However, if the need was not something readily available, the team researched to find accessible resources and supported the family in accessing them. Each case connection is maintained through ongoing communication via phone calls and home visits. In this way, the families see the team as an ally in their journey of becoming more confident and independent within their new community.

Through parent surveys, families have shared their appreciation and gratitude for the connections created through the home visit and communication strategies, especially for the help they have received in working with the schools and acquiring needed resources. The schools have also expressed positive feedback regarding the impact these services have had on their students and families.

For those wishing to implement a home visit program, start with a plan that includes generating a system where you can determine the needs of your families with accuracy. Document the work that you are doing during the home visits, so you have data and records of what has been successful and what may need to be improved. Most importantly, have compassion and heart for your families. You need that in order to the job well.

# Safe Trick or Treat Night Horace Mann Middle School Colorado Springs, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Mann Middle School has identified three Major Improvement Strategies to improve the school. Each of these Major Improvement Strategies has measurable sub-goals embedded within them. The district refers to this as the One Plan. One of those goals is Community Stakeholder and Engagement, which states that the Mann Middle School staff will develop partnerships with the feeder schools and the extended school community through active communication, school community events, site visits, volunteer opportunities, and active family involvement in student learning and activities. The implementation of the Safe Trick or Treat Night was to provide community outreach, collaborate with the surrounding feeder schools, and work with other D11 departments. The feeder schools and Mann had lost a vital connection during the Covid-19 pandemic. The annual Safe Trick or Treat night also promotes a better Halloween experience for everyone in the community.



Staff members and volunteers had specific roles with set-up, community outreach for donations, and providing decorations. Many of the staff and volunteers "adopted" a door to decorate with their own style and ideas. School Resource Officers (SRO) were also enlisted to assist with traffic and security. This event helped develop solidarity between the elementary feeder schools and encouraged the community to get to know the staff and students. The Safe Trick or Treat event also provided an opportunity to reach out to school partners, businesses, and local churches, increasing the positive school climate.



The practice was evaluated by the outcome of participation and connections made through feeder schools, parents, and the neighborhood. The event has attracted almost 900 neighborhood students and their families in the past and continues to grow. Challenges included the size of the event, possible weather, and having enough volunteer participation.

The Safe Trick or Treat Night is an amazing community outreach program that is fun and wide reaching. Detailed planning, collaboration, organization, and communication are key. A significant amount of volunteer support is also integral to the event's success.



 **BOULDER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT** In Spring of last year at a Families and Educators Together (FET) team gathering, one courageous Spanish speaking mom said, “I’m so upset to just find out now in April that my child is failing a class. Why didn’t the teacher share that information with me at any point earlier in the semester?” This led to discussions about how staff can regularly update families on their students’ academic progress. The goal was to narrow the communication gap and academic gap, particularly for non-English speaking families. With the district recently supporting the use of the communication app Talking Points, the FET team at Louisville Middle School decided to move forward with this tool.

Talking Points was the preferred method of communication due to its ease of use. The principal allocated specific time for teachers to identify, and then communicate with, the students and families who would benefit the most from academic updates. Positive messages, as well as concerns or constructive messages, were encouraged. Approximately 50 teachers communicated with the families of students they had identified. Staff prioritized families they had not communicated enough with previously and non-English speaking families for text updates. This increased communication with 150-200 families.

Responses from families were immediate and well received. Teachers also appreciated the tool as they were able to be intentional in their communication. As a result, more ongoing communication between families and teachers was evident. Because strengthening family partnerships was included in Louisville Middle School’s Unified Improvement Plan, there was increased leverage to implement a communication tool such as Talking Points. One of the main challenges included taking time to utilize the program amidst competing priorities. Having the principal set aside specific time for teachers to communicate with families emphasized the importance of the strategy.

Those wishing to replicate this practice should allocate intentional and purposeful time to utilize Talking Points, or a similar communication tool. It helps to utilize a time when your staff is in the same space, such as staff meetings, so they can collaborate and support one another in reaching out to families.



Eisenhower Elementary School found that a communication gap persisted with underrepresented families due to not sharing information in families' preferred languages and communicating only by email. Many parents expressed they were not aware of opportunities (like after school classes) and families had challenges around attendance and discipline because they were not informed adequately about the school's policy. At a Family Educators Together (FET) meeting, parents voiced on several occasions that they were not aware of the school's approach around a host of topics (i.e., can I come to lunch?, what volunteer opportunities are there?, who on the staff is bilingual?). Therefore, the goal was to equip families with an array of information about every aspect of the school so that families could more easily access opportunities and know how to navigate their child's learning at the school. The FET team co-created a FAQ tool that could be translated into any language needed and allow families access to necessary school information. The steps to creating the FAQ sheet were:

1. Parents were asked in small groups to come up with questions or general themes of information they would like to know, including information on discipline, bullying, and after school classes.
2. The principal and FET team leaders generated answers to the questions and had the answers translated in all needed languages.
3. The FET team blended small groups of educators and families to review the questions and answers, paying close attention to language (i.e., is it clear? Is it too much info? Is it edu-speak?).
4. The FET team leaders took the feedback and created a polished version of the document.
5. The FAQ sheet was distributed through multiple pathways including printing and mailing it; distributing it during Back to School Night; texting via Talking Points; and QR codes placed on newsletters, emails, and the school website.

Using the FAQ sheet, families became much more informed about every facet of the school culture and practices. They were able to be more included in the school community and advocate for their child in accessing opportunities they historically did not know about. As a result, parents felt more connected and more informed about how the school operates, and more confident in reaching out to staff.

Anecdotally, families shared the FAQ sheet was an incredible tool to help them understand more about how the school operates and enable them to feel safe, comfortable, and knowledgeable in partnering with the school. Parents even suggested a new club and engaged in new leadership roles. The FAQ process has been replicated by five additional schools in the district. One main challenge was helping the principal find time to generate answers to the questions before the next FET meeting. Another challenge was trying to determine how many and which languages the FAQ sheet needed to be translated to. The FET team initially waited for parents to request the FAQ sheet in their native language. Next year, the team will be proactive and find the appropriate languages from the school roster.

The FAQ sheet is an easy and relatively quick high-leverage FSCP practice. It does not involve more than two rounds of co-created collaboration between families and staff. It helps to have a clear team or committee that can spearhead the work and get the viewpoints of a diverse array of underrepresented families. Staff should also participate in these conversations because there may be a topic that families leave off simply for not being in the know.



The Colorado Springs School District 11 (D11) formed a Family, Schools, and Community Partnership (FSCP) Collaborative with members from many areas of the district including preschool, MTSS, communications, adult and family education, Project Aware, restorative practices, engagement, special education, community liaisons, Title I, CLDE, community partners, parents, and students. This Collaborative used the P-12 FSCP rubrics from the Colorado Department of Education to focus their work for the district. The Collaborative was co-chaired by the DAC chair (a parent) and the D11 Engage department lead. Part of the focus for the Collaborative was to ensure the Board of Education knew about FSCP work happening in the district.

Research indicates that family, school, and community partnerships lead to improved student attendance, higher graduation rates, and a deeper sense of belonging. All D11 schools are working on FSCP but the Collaborative wanted to celebrate schools who were seeing benefits from going beyond the usual FSCP strategies and share this at the Board of Education meetings. Therefore, the Collaborative formed a celebrations subcommittee with a purpose to *Bright Spot* schools that were excelling at FSCP. This subcommittee was composed of Dr. Jennifer Schulte, MTSS Facilitator, Nancy Maresh Melo, Special Education Facilitator, and Velvet Stepanek, DAC Chair and parent.

The subcommittee reached out to area superintendents to find schools who were utilizing unique practices or were going above and beyond with FSCP. Collaborative members also recommended schools. The subcommittee attempted to celebrate schools from all areas of the district. The *Bright Spot* celebrated two schools per month with a PowerPoint presentation at board meetings. In addition, each school was presented with a framed certificate to celebrate at a staff meeting. The school names were also included in the District Accountability Committee (DAC) monthly newsletter, distributed to all schools. The subcommittee was also able to build on the relationship between the DAC chair and the superintendent to present the bright spots as part of the superintendent's report. Sharing at staff meetings also helped create a positive school climate.

The celebrations started in January 2023 and continued through May 2023. The following schools and/or events were bright spotted: Coronado High School, Rudy Elementary School, Wilson Elementary School, West Middle School, Stratton Elementary School, Adult and Family Education, Steele Elementary School, Sabin Middle School, Penrose Elementary School, and Mitchell Resource Night.

Positive feedback was received from the superintendent, the Board, and schools. One challenge included getting pictures and information from schools for the celebration presentation in a timely manner. It was also challenging to be included on staff meeting agendas at schools and required flexibility. Celebrating great work is always positive. Family, School, and Community Partnerships can make such a difference for success for every student. Sharing the work being done at other schools helps everyone!

# ILA Interpretation/Translation Devices

## Poudre School District

### Fort Collins, CO



All schools within Poudre School District (PSD) have access to a Spanish speaking or Arabic speaking Family Liaison; however, some are not always on site. To help solve this, PSD learned of translation devices called ILA that could sit at the front office of each school and could further interpret or translate into many additional languages.



POUDRE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
NORTHERN COLORADO

The IT department, Integrated Services department, and Language, Culture & Equity (LCE) department helped the district learn about the devices and how they could be useful to PSD families. The district utilized Covid-19 funds to purchase an ILA device for each school and additional devices for the Integrated Services and LCE department. Each school received contact information for support and training. The devices allowed families to communicate with staff regardless of what language they spoke and did not require waiting for a liaison to arrive. Unintentionally, the ILA devices were also able to be used with newcomer students. It was helpful to communicate with students during the first few weeks of school who did not understand or could not communicate in English and greatly reduced their anxiety.

The schools and liaisons have reported overwhelmingly positive impacts. Other districts have also purchased the devices and are having similar outcomes. However, one challenge is that not all the languages have the text to speech option and are limited to only text, so if a family is not literate, they will not be able to utilize the device. The ILA company is constantly updating the software, so hopefully that will not be an issue in the future.

Advice for districts hoping to utilize the ILA devices would be to make sure each school has the device powered on and plugged in every day. Some schools waited until a family needed the device to try and turn it on. The software frequently updates to add additional languages, and it can sometimes take 30 minutes to update before it can be used. Districts should also order extra devices if one breaks or schools want to borrow one to two for newcomer students.



**BOULDER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT** Over the years, hundreds of families in Boulder Valley School District have conveyed that they do not receive communication from teachers in their preferred language. As a result, these families miss out on vital information about their student and lose an opportunity to develop a relationship with the classroom teacher. For example, at Eisenhower Elementary School last year, 4 out of 10 parents did not know the name of their child’s teacher. Five months later, the Coordinator of Family Partnerships did a 15-minute training on Talking Points for teachers who have students who speak a language other than Spanish. The principal at Eisenhower Elementary implemented the app and noticed a huge change. During its first year with the app, the school sent out 2800 texts and received 3500 texts back from parents. Now the principal sends out texts regularly and Talking Points has opened a flood of two-way communication.

Families and Educators Together (FET) teams identified the need for better communication systems. They asked for parent feedback and identified interested staff to work with families who speak a language other than English at home. The district’s Coordinator of Family Partnerships provided training to teachers on Talking Points. Then, front office staff helped load student information into the app to reduce the burden for teachers. Finally, FET teams shared about the Talking Points app with families so they could become comfortable with it. Eisenhower Elementary was an early adopter and champion for utilizing the Talking Points app. Talking points is not district wide yet, but principals are hearing how easy it is to set up and utilize.



One FET leader shared, “I’m loving Talking Points and glad we’re about to train the whole staff next week. I used to only email my class parents once a week. I communicate four or five times more now by texting them. I often send them one sentence where in the past I’d never send a one sentence email. Text really is a way for more ongoing spontaneous connection.” Talking Points has allowed families greater access to their child’s education, and they can now better support their children as they have access to projects and academic information in their own language. Families feel more connected to staff and more comfortable asking questions.

One challenge of the program is getting more schools who are disconnected from underrepresented families aware of the benefits of using the app. Talking Points is not a district mandate just yet so making schools that do not have a FET team more aware of the app is a priority. Setting up the app also takes a bit of work on the front end. Therefore, teachers must see the value of the app. Parents have also requested videos, so the team is working on a variety of ways to send quick videos about events.

For those hoping to implement Talking Points, start small and do not wait to get all your schools on board. Cultivate one or two champions at each school and draw on someone at the district level who can gain experience with the app and provide training. When talking with schools, emphasize how easy it is for both educators and families to utilize, that the application is free for families, and the positive return is huge with very little investment of time and energy.

Traylor Academy, an ECE-5th grade school, is nestled in southwest Denver between a middle and high school. In the 2022-23 school year, a major Denver Public School goal was to create safe and welcoming environments for students and the community. Traylor students and families also completed a survey and results indicated the community desired more arts-based programming. These two factors were the driving forces behind AMPED Nights. AMPED Nights were a grassroots creation from the wants and needs of all stakeholders in the community. AMPED is an acronym for Art, Music, Physical Education, and Dance. The goal of AMPED nights at Traylor was two-fold: to provide an opportunity for students to perform and exhibit their work from specials classes and to create an immersive experience for family and friends to participate alongside one another in the arts.



Traylor Academy had not had a visual arts program in several years, and students, staff, and families advocated to bring back a robust art program that would benefit student learning. After hiring new art and music teachers for the 2022-23 school year, the specials team collaborated to create semi-annual programming called AMPED Nights. While the teachers taught and practiced with students in the classroom to prepare for the community event nights, the principal, family liaison, and secretary promoted and marketed the events via email, Class Dojo, Facebook, and fliers. The parent/ teacher group, Traylor Academy Boosters, also organized concessions for the events. Regarding the Dual Capacity Framework for Building Family-School Partnerships, families at Traylor served as advocates, then encouragers, and now supporters of AMPED Nights.



AMPED Night is a 90-minute event that is a celebration of art, movement, music, and community. Each specials teacher facilitates three 30-minute sessions. Grade levels are split to rotate through each of those sessions. In the classrooms leading up to AMPED Nights, students collaborated and used Habits of Discussion to work together to create, perform, and practice with one another in all three special classes. During the most recent AMPED Night at Traylor, the music teacher held a song and dance performance on stage as students sang and families played accompaniment on instruments. The PE/Dance teacher set up a circuit of family-game style activities including giant cup stacking, ping pong, and rock climbing while a DJ played upbeat music. The art teacher hosted a TASK Party where tables of supplies and recycled materials were available for use.

As each person or family entered the party, they chose a slip of paper which described a task to create and complete. Tasks ranged from making someone a necklace, to building a box fort with others, to creating decorations for the rooms. In between sessions, the Traylor Academy Boosters served a mix of free and inexpensive concessions in the cafeteria. Student outcomes were improved, as they gained experience showcasing and performing their arts skills. This connects to the Colorado Academic Music Standards of sharing musical learnings in a variety of environments. Anecdotally, the specials team also noted more confidence and risk taking from students.



The initial AMPED Night was evaluated by in-person conversations and feedback from students and family members after the inaugural event. Staff and leaders also circulated the event to get families input right away. After the first AMPED Night, the physical education teacher noted an opportunity for all the music, art, and PE/dance sessions to each include a parent involvement component. Therefore, during the second AMPED Night, families were invited to have a quick demo lesson in order to play instruments alongside their children singing. One challenge of holding the event in the spring was an unexpected winter storm which canceled after school activities and required the event to be rescheduled. Overall, the positive impact of the implementation of AMPED Nights can be summed up in the words of one of Traylor Academy's youngest students: "Can we have another party like that tomorrow?!"

Traylor staff connect their high attendance rate for AMPED Nights to National PTA Standard 2-- communicating effectively. Multiple channels of communication were utilized including family and student surveys, emails, digital principal newsletters, paper fliers, and the Class Dojo app. To remove language barriers, Traylor used the Dojo app which translated the event into six additional native languages. The schedule of performances was also shared in advance, so families knew where to start their evening. To prevent accessibility barriers, the event was held on the first floor of the school in the large common area. The family liaison shared to "embrace the chaos because it's so much fun!" She also recommended that because of the fun of the night, plan for a cushion of time to transition between sessions. People tend to linger when they are engaged and focused before moving to the next activity. Lastly, have parents and teachers volunteer in shifts, rather than a whole evening of service, so they can also participate in the art, music, and physical activities alongside the community.



# Family Connect Program

## Denver Public Schools

### Denver, CO



The mission of Denver Public Schools (DPS) is to provide all students with the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed. DPS is committed to meeting the educational needs of every student and their family through impactful and innovative partnerships that address the needs of the whole family. There are many indicators that illustrate the need for increased family and community support. More than a quarter of DPS students do not graduate on time and more than 2,000 students drop-out before finishing high school. Thirteen percent of students in DPS are identified to have a disability posing significant challenges for families. And nearly 60% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch are significantly impacted by Denver's rising home costs with the median escalating well above the average DPS family income creating instability in living situations.



The FACE Family Connect (FFC) Program was developed by two school social workers in 2019 in response to an identified service gap that recognized that families do not always have adequate support in navigating and connecting with resources. When connections to viable resources are not made available, instability continues to impact the school experience. Multi-generational strategies remove barriers for families, allowing them to engage more deeply with their children. Through this inclusive approach, DPS can increase support for the whole child resulting in families that have stronger trust with the school and are better equipped to support student achievement and school readiness.

Families are referred to the program by specialized service providers in the school such as the school social worker or psychologist as they are most typically engaged with families who have been identified as having more intensive needs and can accurately assess what supports are needed. 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 family dynamics, their strengths, current supports, and needs. The program is strengths-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 further crises and the tools for self-support if future crises should occur. Throughout the relationship with the family, which is not time-limited, the program social workers demonstrate a team approach by working closely with school-based support. Above all, the program aims to build positive relationships with families, build bridges between the family and the school, and provide the highest level of customer service to both the clients and the schools they serve.

The primary tool used to evaluate success is a fourteen-category itemized matrix based on the Arizona Model but adapted to fit the needs of DPS families. The tool measures family functioning using a 1-5 scale from crisis to thriving that cover fourteen areas including food, housing, clothing, employment, transportation, utilities, student attendance, student transportation, health care coverage, parent-school involvement, mental health, and access to services and resources with two additional optional categories to assess childcare and student disability. Whether a client completes their goals is another metric used to evaluate program efficacy. All clients have primary goals which are typically the identified reason the family was referred to the program. Finally, the program uses a satisfaction survey to assess whether schools feel that the program is adequately

supporting them and their families. The survey focuses on questions around customer service, how well the program engages families, whether they are satisfied with services, and plans to continue referring to the program. It also elicits qualitative data through open-ended questions which supports future planning.

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 continuous challenge is keeping school-based professionals trained so that their expectations are aligned with the scope of the program. A social worker in DPS that refers families to the program commented, “The FACE family connect team is the most effective team I have worked with in DPS. The referral process is simple, they are timely, and extremely competent. As a school social worker, I desperately need the FACE family connect team to do the work they do in support of our students and families. My role is so SPED heavy that without the FACE family connect team I worry about how many families could fall through the cracks.”

The following advice is offered to districts who wish to replicate the program:

1. Licensed social workers in case management roles are logically the best fit for the program based on their training and expertise in family systems and community work as well as preparation to respect cultural differences and embrace self-determination. 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.
2. Having and communicating a well-defined scope including service exclusions is an important part of maintaining appropriate program boundaries. For example, although many of the referrals are attached to truancy the program does not take referrals for truancy that do not connect to a specific need. The program asks that schools do assessments to determine root cause and make a referral that aligns with a specific need if the parent consents to program support.
3. Collaboration is key, therefore identifying point people at each school is important as well as an emphasis on building trust and strong relationships within the schools. Thinking of the program as an extension of the school team allows for optimal collaboration, aligns conversations with families, and ensures the family will continue receiving support once the services are closed. Providing orientation to those who refer 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.
4. The ability to meet the client where they are 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.

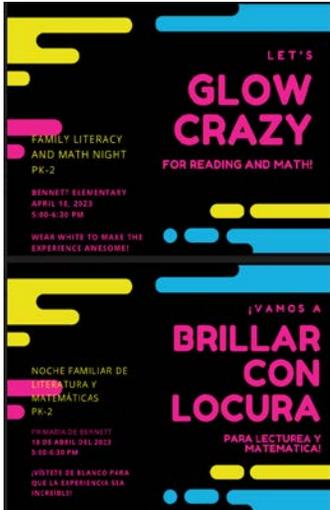
# Glow Crazy for Literacy and Math!

## Bennett Elementary School

### Bennett, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education



As a rural school district where family engagement is vital to student success, the Bennett PK-2 staff, alongside the Literacy Coach and administration, worked to create a family and community event to bring literacy and math alive. Bennett Elementary is a small school on the I-70 corridor with about 300 PK through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, few in-person school events have taken place and parent involvement has not bounced back to what it was prior. Consequently, student academic achievement and growth have also taken a dip.

Putting on "Lets Glow Crazy for Literacy and Math" was a joint effort by all Bennett Elementary staff. The staff worked together to make an inclusive and inviting event for all ages. BES Literacy Coach, Deanne Cronk, and Principal, Britt Travis, took the lead on planning the event.

The event had two goals as the school focused on boosting student achievement in literacy and math as well as increasing family involvement outside of the beginning of year activities, parties, and field trips. The hope was to engage students in fun math/literacy activities and help parents see how simple it can be to recreate these at home. The focus of the night was to help parents help their students at home, but also give families a safe, fun, and inviting learning event that all members could enjoy. Additional materials were provided so parents could take the games and recreate them at home, giving their child more access to literacy and math skill development.



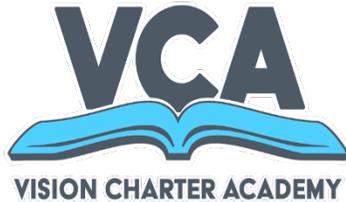
This event was also created with hopes of boosting the school's positive climate and culture. The staff at Bennett wanted parents to know that they are accepted as they are, and that the school truly cares for and believes in their child. The event gave families the opportunity to enjoy a night together and see the staff unified and engaged with students across all grade levels. This event displayed collectiveness, inclusivity, and furthered the school's desire to continue to build trusting relationships and strengthen the school's capacity to boost student achievement.



Bennett staff evaluated the event in multiple ways. They gathered feedback from parents in person and over social media when the flyer was initially released. This enabled the staff to provide clarity about the details of the event as needed. They also utilized family attendance as an indicator of success. Over 200 students attended, including students and families that did not attend Bennett. Additionally, the event offered both glow-in-the-dark and non-dark classrooms where games could be played to accommodate all family needs. Neon and bright colors in the rooms that were not glow-in-the-dark were used to create a glow effect.

The advice Bennett staff has for anyone wanting to recreate this event is to “just simply do it!” Bennett Elementary plans to hold the event on a yearly basis. Next year, the event will be held earlier in the year (before spring), so students have more time to play the games at home, but also to welcome parents at the beginning of the year. Bennett staff also encourage the use of electronic templates for the games so they can be linked to the weekly newsletter and families can access them as needed.





Vision Charter Academy was founded on the belief that parents should be an integral part of their child's educational experience. Therefore, Learning Sessions were active from the beginning. The goals of the Learning Sessions were to establish with families a common goal around educational success, to honor the expertise of each person in the group, to establish what worked well that week and what didn't work well that week, to confirm skill acquisition of learners, and to provide resources (i.e., if it didn't go well, how do you remediate or provide resources? If it did go well, how do you enrich the learning and success?).

Highly Qualified Coordinators (HQC) meet weekly with families to conduct Learning Sessions. Each HQC only has a certain number of families so they can be sure to meet consistently, but also have flexibility when scheduling with families. A key factor to Learning Sessions is relationship-building. The HQC must have a strong relationship with the student and family in order to provide needed support and resources that will lead to greater learner success.

Learning Sessions take place mainly with K-8 students. The student and their family meet weekly with a HQC for one hour. The student brings work samples and they start the session with how their week has gone. They discuss the successes and challenges they are having. The goal is to build a relationship with the staff, so the family feels comfortable sharing difficulties. This information is not used to get the student out of doing work, as there are accountability systems, but the school staff provide understanding and support/resources that the student or family may benefit from accessing. The HQC checks on progress for the week and if the student is on target with skill acquisition. If parents miss meetings, the HQC will call and send letters to ensure consistent communication.

The program hopes to evaluate its data using a learning management system. However, the current system cannot pull data very well so that has been a challenge. The Academy will move to another data system (Performance Matters) that will allow for better data review, such as a checklist that will allow administrators to see that the meetings are happening. The data will show who is meeting their targets, what interventions are being used, and what parents have disengaged from the program and are missing their meetings. One of the biggest challenges is disengaged parents and parents who do not show up for the meetings. The HQC tries different things including persistent contact or directly communicating with the student instead.

For those hoping to implement this program, communication training for staff is crucial. They must be able to actively listen and be willing to say the hard things. This means staff must establish a relationship in a way that allows them to say challenging things. Lastly, ensure both documentation and data analysis systems are in place to help review and improve the program.

# Parent Academy for Student Success (PASS)

## Westminster Public Schools

### Westminster, CO



The Parent Academy for Student Success (PASS) was created to help families better support their children on their education journey. Westminster Public Schools (WPS) has a significant number of parents who did not graduate from high school and many who are unaware of the post-secondary opportunities available to their children. PASS was created in 2017 by the district's Department of Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Development. It was modeled after the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) founded in California in 1987. A team of educators from WPS witnessed PIQE in action and were inspired to create PASS for families in their community. The Board of Education also took a very hands-on approach in promoting the program and attending graduation ceremonies.

PASS was first implemented at the high school and middle school levels. However, due to the success and popularity of the program, it has now been adapted to the elementary level. Parents and guardians attend a nine-week program that offers a flexible schedule and free childcare so families can, in essence, "go back to school." PASS also offers parenting skills for those who seek assistance. As of the summer of 2023, five hundred parents have graduated from PASS, impacting more than one thousand students.

The program is evaluated by pre- and post-program surveys completed by participating parents. The high school graduation rate for students from participating families increased an estimated 40 percent. In addition, college enrollment increased by approximately 20 percent with students taking more rigorous college preparatory classes. Students also had increased attendance rates. In addition, parents and guardians shared powerful and emotional stories about the positive impact the program had not only on their students' academics, but on their own sense of confidence and purpose for the entire family.

The PASS program was so popular in the beginning that the demand for the program outpaced the district's ability to deliver services. To help solve this problem, WPS was able to develop important partnerships to support the program. For example, the Westminster Rotary Club celebrated graduates by donating refurbished computers to parents who finished the program.

Board of Education member Christine Martinez helped the families celebrate graduation in Spring 2023, telling parents, "Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to put your kids first. Believe me, they feel it, we all feel it."

"I fell through the cracks of the education system. During the first class I learned about PASS and all it had to offer. I was moved to tears," said parent Denise McGrath, who struggled in school because of undiagnosed attention deficit disorder. McGrath feared she wouldn't be able to support her children in school, but through PASS she learned how to help them.





The goal of hosting a Parent Academy was to support families in the areas they felt they needed to learn more about or contribute more to other families. Initially, it was framed as what staff felt like families needed and over time turned into a collaborative effort between families and schools to find topics that were relevant, needed, and built the capacity of families to strengthen the family-school-community partnership.

The assistant superintendent of the Sand Creek Zone expressed a passion and interest in supporting families through parent education. The community liaison worked with local experts in their fields to find topics that they could present on or topics they already had in place that were ready to present to families. Many of the topics and presentations were taken from professional development given to staff that could easily be modified to support families. Some of the community groups that were available to present were local mental health experts, district community engagement advocates, Children's Hospital, the El Paso County Health Department, Colorado Springs Police Department, school resource officers, teachers, and district nursing staff.

The Sand Creek Zone surveys parents each year on topics that they would like to learn more about and issues they are having with their children or in their own lives. The survey includes an open paragraph question for any other topic families would like to hear more about. Families felt empowered to better support their students at home and build partnerships between school, family, and community. By utilizing district staff, families could be confident in the knowledge and expertise within their own school.

Surveys were administered after each parent academy to assess the effectiveness of the information given to families. Attendance, responsiveness to the survey, and views on videos posted after the event were all ways to evaluate the success of the Parent Academy as well. It was difficult to find the best time to get families in the door to participate in the Parent Academy. Food, childcare, advanced notice, evening times, day times, and staff advertisement have all been utilized, however attendance still is not where the district would like it to be.

Recommendations include use your families as the experts; you do not always need to find a professional outside of your own community. Also, ask your families what they want and what they need instead of assuming what they are struggling with. They may bring up an underlying issue you had not thought of addressing and that could be a catalyst towards a more positive outcome for student success.

PBIS Family Night  
Namaqua Elementary School  
Loveland, CO



During the 2022-2023 school year, Namaqua Elementary revamped their PBIS and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) systems. The school wanted to include families as part of this process. They created a PBIS Family Night where staff led stations to teach families the strategies practiced at school and how they could use these same strategies at home. The goal was to build a partnership with families and provide them with resources to support their child's social emotional needs. The entire staff, PBIS team, and PTA joined together to plan, create, and implement the Family Night.

Families were invited to Family Night to participate in hands on activities that focused on family growth and social emotional needs. The PTA provided dinner for everyone who attended. There were a variety of activities for families to participate in throughout the night. Families were able to make a mindfulness jar, their own PBIS Matrix, a talking piece to use for family circle time, and learn cozy corner and incentive ideas to use at home. The event also provided a photo booth and yoga room for families. As families participated in the evening, students received stamps on their game board. When they completed their game board, they

received a ticket to put in a drawing for a prize. Families also completed a survey to give feedback about the evening. When the survey was completed, they received another ticket for the prize drawing. All prizes were activities for families to participate in such as bowling, laser tag, dinner gift card, movie passes, and museum passes.

The evening was evaluated by feedback from the families. Sixty families participated and gave feedback. Every family that participated in the evening loved it. Families shared what activity they felt would be the most beneficial to use at home. The families loved the evening so much, they asked to have similar events more often.

The advice Namaqua staff would give to those hoping to replicate this program would be to create a plan that provides plenty of time to accomplish all the needed tasks. Also, give families plenty of notice to ensure solid engagement. Lastly, make the event unique to your school and connect it to your students, families, and culture.

# SEL Workshops: Lovely Feelings en Familia

## Paris Elementary School

### Aurora, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

At Paris Elementary School, having parents as the ultimate community partners is the best path to student wellness. As a Community School in Aurora, the presence of community members and families wanting to support their students is palpable during any given school day. Parents and guardians are always invited to community meetings to discuss what initiatives students may need to help them thrive. Staff and guardians routinely work on projects together and families often talk about their students over lunch with staff members. During one meeting, a family member communicated to the Family Liaison, Melissa Ortiz-Vargas, that her child had been talking with her about different Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Tools that she had learned at school. The parent indicated that while she was excited that her student was gaining tools to support her wellbeing, giving parents access to these tools as well would further support student mental health.

Excited by the idea of aligning social emotional learning practices at school and at home, Melissa and the Community School Coordinator, Susan Gershwin, coordinated efforts to secure grant funding that would cover the cost of a series of four workshops. The costs of the training included translation into Spanish, refreshments, and materials for students to take home. Melissa then reached out to a community partner, Be Well, for support in planning activities and practices for each session.

To begin each of the four workshops, families were invited to have refreshments and chat with other workshop participants, creating a safe space for people to share ideas and experiences. Students and families were then split into separate groups to allow for meaningful conversations surrounding mental health. Families discussed their personal practices, if any, with breath work, yoga, music, art, journaling, and physical activity. These practices included activities that students learn about in school to support their wellness. Students and families were then reunited to practice each activity as a family. At the end of each session, families were able to take home relevant materials so that they could continue focusing on wellness as a family. Their materials included yoga mats, physical activity cards, personal journals, writing utensils, art supplies, and customizable kites.



Throughout the course of the workshop series, families and staff members were able to learn from one another about different ways to support their students while creating a community. Though the activities were guided by Paris staff, families also provided insights into what schools and fellow guardians could do with their students. The practice was evaluated through anecdotes and observations from participants. A survey will also be sent out to follow up with families to gauge if they have or will engage in the activities together outside of the training, as well as what the effects were on student mental wellness.

Staff and families at Paris Elementary School are partners. There are no greater experts on students than their families, and the success of this program is largely due to the equal partnership educators and guardians share. To best replicate such a workshop series, opening conversations to families at the beginning, middle, and end of the series is important to ensuring success and, most importantly, showing students that they are cared for by all members of their school community.

Standard 3 — Supporting Student Success  
Essential Element 3 — Design Capacity-Building Opportunities

# Test-Taking Family Partnership Strategies

## Arvada K-8

### Arvada, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Arvada K-8 is a Title 1 school with 80% of families qualifying for free/reduced fee status. The demographic of families includes newcomers and families that are navigating a variety of life circumstances. The Arvada K-8 staff and Family Engagement Liaison (FEL) saw an opportunity for students and their caregivers to learn from each other by inviting the adults to join their students in the classroom to learn the steps and practice of standardized testing on Chromebooks. The goals of the practice were:



- 1) To build interaction between students and adults around an academic topic.
- 2) To build communication between students and adults that could then be transferred to home learning support.
- 3) To introduce the basic use of Chromebook devices to adults that may struggle to support learning at home because of lack of knowledge about the device.
- 4) To reduce student anxiety around testing by sharing the experience with their parents, guardians, and caregivers.

The FEL approached the school leadership team and the instructional coach with the idea of piloting this test practice for 3rd-5th graders. After some discussion, primarily around logistics and need, the team decided that 3rd and 4th grade would be the most viable target group because of the newness of some of the types of tests that were going to be administered in the coming months. After the practice was approved by the School Leadership Team (SLT), the FEL discussed logistics with the 3rd and 4th grade teachers, who agreed to pilot the program.



Parents and guardians were invited into their student's classroom and sat next to them as if they were also students in their class. This situation put the students and the attending adults on a relatively similar level of knowledge. However, the students had been taking practice tests for a few days and were familiar with the use of Chromebooks. Tips were shared to help students and families prepare. Messaging included getting a good night's sleep and eating a hearty breakfast. To meet the needs of families, the program provided breakfast sandwiches to all participants, which added the welcoming aspect of a community meal to the program. During the meal, teachers asked families to *'share what it was like to take a test when you were in grade school.'* The adults were quick to share stories of pencil and paper tests, filling in little circles completely, and strategies that had worked for them (and some that hadn't). The teachers then shared basic details about the reasons for CMAS testing, and what the outcomes mean for both the students and the school.

Using their student's Chromebook, the adults were then asked to open the Chromebook and log in. They quickly learned that some students do not charge their Chromebooks, and that Wi-Fi is a challenge when 30 people are trying to log on all at the same time. The teachers told them it was a timed test, and the adults

Standard 3 — Support Student Success

Essential Element 3 — Design Capacity-Building Opportunities



struggled through the first few steps of accessing the test, and then answering some of the questions. The students then took over as their families' teacher, guiding them through how to log in efficiently and navigate the questions. Students and adults discussed answers to questions. Everyone felt the anxiety of a time constraint, and discussed ways to breathe, focus, and navigate the anxiety. In the last minutes of the class period, adults and students discussed ways that they could continue practicing test taking at home. Families were encouraged to use these strategies to continue to build partnerships and support throughout the school year and at home.

Over the next few months, teachers reported better family engagement and responses to communications from families. The CMAS scores of the 3rd and 4th graders will not be available for a few months, but teachers discussed that students were better prepared and seemed more at ease than in past years. The practice was evaluated verbally before families left the classroom. They were asked what they learned, if the session was valuable, and why. The FEL also asked the teachers for their evaluation of the practice. The teachers were incredibly surprised at how valuable the practice had been; not only for the collaborative learning that had occurred, but for the multi-generational capacity building and relationship-building.

Teachers had valuable time with parents and guardians, who got a small glimpse into both the challenges and rewards of teaching. A challenge the program experienced was with two newcomer families who did not speak English (their students were part of the ELL program and had similar understanding of English). The program provided an interpreter, but struggled with deciding to what extent that interpreter should help, as the goal was for the student to do the teaching. In the end, the interpreter was used during the teacher instruction and group discussion, and assisted the student as needed.

The keys to the success of this practice are:

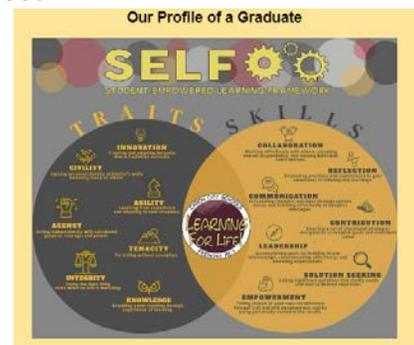
- 1) Strategically identify specific grade levels, taking into consideration the needs of the students.
- 2) Tailor your event to a time, location, and mode (in person vs. virtual) that will ensure robust participation.
- 3) Choose a breakfast meal that is grab-n-go and leaves little mess or clean-up,
- 4) Discuss all the details of the practice with each teacher individually so that their concerns and suggestions are equally heard.
- 5) Let teachers do what they do best (teach) and have the FEL or another point person take care of getting the word out to adults; getting their sign-up (limit two adults per student); re-confirming attendance the day before the event; and ordering, setting up, delivering, and cleaning up breakfast items.
- 6) Have copies of practice tests and other tips ready-made and ask teachers to use them as a 'parting gift.'
- 7) If a teacher is uncomfortable with doing this event for whatever reason, ask them to teach you how to do the practice tests and do the event as a family coffee or roundtable instead.

Overall, teachers shared, "This was the best learning experience I've ever done with families in the classroom" and "I had forgotten what the stress of taking a test feels like. Now I know to listen better when my student says they are stressed about a test, and also, how to work with them before a test so there is less stress."

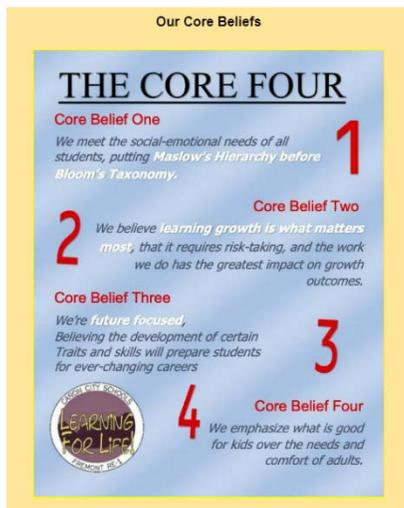


Cañon City School District (CCSD) recognized they were not receiving enough information from traditional accountability structures such as the district performance framework or state testing data. The former superintendent had experience with a smaller district in which an instructional review process was utilized. They felt this model held promise for Cañon City. The goal was to conduct a full review of every school every year and identify opportunities for improvement. This allowed the district to conduct trend analyses year over year to see growth and areas of need.

The Compass Committee, Cañon City's District Accountability Committee, plans and implements the review process. The Compass Committee is made up of the superintendent, the Cañon City mayor, board members, the high school principal, a representative from the teacher's union, a representative from the classified staff's union, members of community organizations, school staff, students, and families. While Compass Committee members conduct the review, all school principals and staff participate.



Instructional Program Reviews take place each school year from February through March. Evaluations are conducted in the following nine areas: Climate, Culture, Vision, and Purpose; Student Health and Social-Emotional Wellness; Innovative Instruction; Equity of Opportunity; Opportunities for Learning Experiences; Effective Assessment Practices; Improvement of Instruction and Learning; Support for Positive Student Behavior; and Resource Acquisition and Maintenance of a Safe Learning Environment. A tenth area added into the final report is Parent and Student Perception, which is assessed using perception surveys. While it is called an Instructional Program Review, it is clear it goes beyond instruction. The Compass Committee appoints a review team to visit each school. These are called site reviews. They take a full school day and include opportunities for staff and students to present information and evidence as well as opportunities to observe classroom instruction.



A final assessment during the spring semester shows each school staff the results of their year's work. Panels composed of 12-20 participants trained in the process review a broad array of collected data, including surveys from families, students, and staff. Additionally, each school must complete a self-reflection using the same scoring instrument and provide artifacts that prove their performance level. After reviewing a school's evidence, the panel members spend a full day inside the school where they observe the educational environment and interview staff and students. Finally, the group uses either a computer or cell phone to submit their individual scores.

After discussing and finalizing ratings the following day, each panel submits its ratings to the Compass Committee for final approval. Before the end of the



school year, each school and its community members receive a comprehensive overview of scores, strengths, and areas of growth. The district then uses the information to help identify and support the professional needs of staff for the upcoming year. The comprehensive overview is shared again in September. Sharing the results a second time ensures that any families new to the district have access to and are aware of the results and know what the district and school's plans are for improvement.

The Compass Committee meets monthly and continuously assesses the process. Ideas for modification are discussed and the committee decides together to implement those modifications or not. The committee also partners with the University of Colorado, Boulder's Center for Assessment, Design, Research, and Evaluation (CADRE). CADRE evaluated the district's assessment design, provided constructive feedback to help make improvements, and studied the district's data. The main challenge of this program is that it is a time intensive process, though well worth it. The program also found that when new members join the Compass Committee, it is a challenge to train them on the process without taking up the whole committee's time with redundant information and effort.

For those who wish to utilize this practice, consider scale. This practice can be quite difficult to implement in a large school district and would certainly need to be modified. Secondly, consider authenticity. Try to tell staff that you want to observe a normal day and a normal lesson, and that staff should not put on a "dog and pony show" for you. However, one seventh grade student shared, "I wish [the review panel] was here every day, my teacher is never like this!" Because of this the Compass Committee is thinking about making the site reviews unannounced, though that presents its own challenges. The committee is also thinking about conducting multiple, smaller reviews. The most authentic site review will provide the most meaningful data. Lastly, it is critical that the superintendent's voice is not louder than anyone else's on the Compass Committee. All opinions are valued, and you should do your best to create a safe space where people are comfortable sharing and having difficult conversations.

# Listening Circles

## Colorado Springs School District 11

### Colorado Springs, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

In 2021-2022, the D11 Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP) Collaborative determined that beginning with Essential Element One (Creating an Inclusive Culture) of Colorado's FSCP P-12 Framework would be the best place to start when looking at how to streamline effective family engagement practices within the district. They focused on one of Essential Element One's reflective questions: How are you learning about families lived experiences? To help address this question, staff suggested the restorative justice practice of listening circles as a first step to building trust and uncovering families' experiences.

The collaborative agreed to embark on a district wide Listening Tour in the Spring of 2022. After conducting five listening circles in strategic geographic, community-based locations, the listening tour proved successful and continued in the 2022-2023 school year.

The members of the Listening Circles team included a District Restorative Practice Specialist, team members from the Student Support and Engagement department, and members from the D11 Engage department. The process began in the Fall of 2021 and included reaching out to all schools that identified Family Engagement as one of their major improvement strategies in their school improvement plan. All Title 1 schools were also contacted.

Through conversations with principals, learning teams, School Accountability Committees (SACs), and PTA/PTO's, the district learned about individual schools' culture and climate, communication effectiveness (or lack thereof), and how they viewed family engagement at their school. One recommendation for each school was to conduct separate listening circles for parents/caregivers and staff. By implementing listening circles, schools were directly addressing one of their major improvement strategies, family engagement. Family engagement was explained as ultimately stemming from trust.

To establish a meaningful, symbiotic relationship between families and their schools, it is essential to begin building a trusting, inclusive, equitable culture for families. Studies show involved and engaged families can improve student outcomes. Therefore, the restorative practice of listening circles can lead to positive student academic and social success. In the 2022-2023 school year, three listening circles were successfully conducted. Two were held for parents and caregivers at the elementary level and one was held for staff members at the elementary level. D11 Engage secured a grant to cover all listening circle costs including paying personnel, providing childcare, and providing food.

For each circle there was an assigned note taker. Afterwards, the team met to go over notes and discuss themes that emerged. Those notes and themes were then provided to the principal. For the staff listening circles, the notes and themes went to both the principal and the area superintendent. Since the circles were conducted throughout the second semester, feedback regarding what administration plans to do with the information has not been received. Most responses or action taken will be in the Fall 2023 semester. Despite a concerted effort

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



#### Family Engagement Listening Circles

WE WANT TO LEARN FROM OUR FAMILIES!

Elementary invites families of our school community to share your experiences as parents and caregivers. This is a time for your school to learn from your lived experiences through a confidential sharing circle.

*"an opportunity to speak and listen to each other in an atmosphere of safety, decorum, and equality...to help people gain a shared sense of understanding and emotional connection" (The International*

Building Trusting Relationships One Conversation at a Time!

Please join us!  
Friday May 5th, 2023  
Field Day after lunch  
\*Childcare and Pizza will be provided.

Please register through this QR Code:



to advertise, the circles had very low attendance. QR codes were printed on flyers to better attract participants, as well as provide insight into the degree of commitment from those attending. Attendance was the most significant challenge.

Recommendations include developing a step-by-step "contract" for principals to agree upon. Additionally, outline details of what services will be provided, the school's expectations, and specific deadlines. If you think you have advertised enough, **ADVERTISE MORE!** Make phone calls, be positively relentless! If the seats are not full, circles lose their effectiveness.

With approximately 150 Title I schools in Denver Public Schools, it is important that the district be thoughtful with the supports it needs to succeed. To provide additional support to Title I schools and families, the Family and Community Engagement (FACE) department introduced Parenting Partners, a six-week program that combines parenting and leadership skills to empower parents to contribute to their student's success.

The Parenting Partners program begins with an invitation to Title I schools from the FACE Department. School leadership and liaisons are trained by district staff in a large group setting of up to 15 school leaders, which creates a collaborative environment for schools to learn alongside each other. The first session is called the 'trainer-of-trainers.' After the trainer-of-trainers session, school leadership and liaisons return to their schools to implement the program with their families. From there, the FACE department supports as needed, such as providing childcare and co-facilitation to ensure the schools' workshops run smoothly.



The Parenting Partners program builds parent leadership capacity and produces strong family-school partnerships. There are six comprehensive workshops to equip parents with practical tools to:

1. Support their children's academic, emotional, and social success.
2. Create structure for productive home learning environments.
3. Boost family wellness and positive effective communication.
4. Become engaged advocates, contributors, and leaders.

FACE began the Parenting Partners program in the 2021 school year. In 2021, only eight people were trained to facilitate the program. Since 2022, 50 facilitators have been trained to implement the program at their individual schools or offices with 16 more school leaders on the waitlist for programming this coming fall. Each of the 58 trainers can lead parent training for up to 40 parents. The most recent training was led by Elvia Lubin, a family liaison at Goldrick Elementary. Elvia trained eight English speaking parents and 14 Spanish speaking parents. She reported that families were engaged and completed all homework sessions, which increased their connection to their students and their ability to be involved in their student's learning.

After each training session, trainees submit feedback for improvement of the program. The feedback was used to individualize the program and make small shifts that better fit individual school needs. The biggest challenges identified were the length of the program and finding room in the budget to fund such a large toolkit-based program. However, the Parenting Partners organization has other options leading to similar family-school partnership outcomes. For example, schools and families that are unable to do a full six weeks of classes can complete smaller programs such as the Healthy Meals Challenge program, a three-week workshop to help families have better conversations around the dinner table. FACE will host a Parenting Partners reunion in the 2023 summer to gather more feedback and to be able to come in even stronger for the 23-24 school year.



The advice the program would give to districts that want to implement a Parenting Partners program, or any parenting program, is to be flexible with the curriculum. Nothing is one size fits all when it comes to parenting so it is important to know the cultures you are working with and plan accordingly. Another important finding in implementing this practice is holding space and time for families and school leadership to collaborate and practice presenting. Ample time is given during training sessions for questions and discussion. The last 2-3 workshops invite trainees to lead as a group. They are given feedback on their leadership so that they feel better equipped to lead sessions on their own and feel confident to share Parenting Partners with more families time and time again.

# Community Advisory Groups Denver Public Schools Denver, CO



Denver Public Schools seek to create spaces of engagement with the focus of being inclusive. However, many communities do not always feel welcomed or comfortable in those spaces. A family's sense of belonging is tremendously important to feeling comfortable to advocate, collaborate, and bring their authentic selves to the table. Over the years, various advisory groups have been successful when supported in the right way.

To this end the Superintendent, Chief of Staff, and Executive Director of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) set out to create the Latine Education Advisory Committee (LEAC) to serve as an exemplar for other communities to create spaces that people could feel comfortable in, grow their knowledge and capacity, and impart wisdom and experience. The group sought to present a community voice to help district leaders make thoughtful and more informed decisions for all DPS stakeholders. The Community Engagement Manager and the Operational Team Managers played key roles in operationalizing and taking this from theory to action!

This committee has provided a framework for other communities to build similar advisory spaces that model inclusiveness and represent what the community wants to see. The excitement and desire to engage was evidenced by over 100 applications. The advisory committee will leverage this to make sure all communities feel valued and encouraged to engage with the school district.

This practice continues to be evaluated using pre- and post-survey data. These surveys measure how people feel about various district structures that capture their feedback, measure how welcoming various communities feel, and generate ideas and opportunities from the community to partner on in the future.

It's worthwhile to create more of these types of spaces for community to increase connections, build capacity, and create deeper relationships that help share the accountability and leverage specific community voice. These are spaces that help increase participation and comfortability in a number of other spaces such as the District Accountability Committee (DAC) and parent or community statewide taskforce. It also creates authentic dialogues within various communities. From the Community Engagement Manager, Amanda Bouche's, perspective, "In building this group it was great to see how so many folks were representing a shared community but how they also brought a lot of diversity in terms of perspective and experience." The Executive Director of FACE, Adella Arredondo, commented on the importance of creating and tending to this space: "This group advises the district and its leaders on important elements and aspects in the Latine and Hispanic communities of Denver; to advocate for increased educational opportunities for our students and families in the Latine community."

# Family Transition to Middle School Parent Panels

## Homestake Peak School & Gypsum Creek Middle School

### Avon, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

YouthPower365 desired to enhance what was already being done by the Eagle County School District to support student and family transitions to middle school. This included creating a safe and welcoming space for families to share their expertise when transitioning to middle school, as well as for the rising students' families to ask questions and feel more comfortable and confident in their role. The goals were to support the formation of positive communication and relationships and highlight the importance of family engagement at the middle school level, recognizing the family role looks different compared to the elementary school level.



Utilizing best practices in family engagement, YouthPower365 sought to develop a panel experience that was strengths-based, honored lived experiences and funds of knowledge, and was rooted in positive relationships with a focus on two-way communication. YouthPower365 spent the past year listening to families and community partners and utilizing various parent surveys to hear and learn. Feedback included that while there were many activities to support students in transition, there weren't supports available for families, leaving them with unanswered questions and feelings of being lost, unwelcomed, and uninformed before their students even enter the new school building.

YouthPower365's Family Engagement Team identified two Eagle County School District middle schools that have been committed to partnership and investment in family engagement. Principals and staff with family connections (English Language Acquisition teachers and counselors) were approached with the YouthPower365 proposal to host Family Transition to Middle School Parent Panels. Both schools welcomed this proposal and moved forward to add this to the agenda of their building's Family Orientation and Middle School Building Tour held in the Spring of 2023.



In partnership with the above school leaders, YouthPower365 created a script for the panels that followed the principal's welcome and presentation of their program. The script included a welcome to families and acknowledgement of the important part they play in the learning and success of their students and the recognition that the panel was in response to family feedback. The topics were family generated including communication, growing independence, peer relationships, and essential organizational and self-efficacy skills. YouthPower365 provided a moderator who asked specific questions to panelists and facilitated a Q&A session. Interpretation was available to promote participation.



Anecdotally, the feedback from families and educators was very positive. A teacher in attendance, who is also a parent, reported this was the first time family voice and experience was represented and felt there was power in this experience. Both middle schools who participated in the panels have expressed interest in partnering for future years. The middle schools and YouthPower365 were intentional about removing barriers and were thoughtful about the evening event timing, childcare, light dinner and drinks, and Spanish interpretation. Interpretation did lengthen the panel responses, which in turn limited the quantity



and depth of responses. Prior to the events, the panelists were identified and prepared their responses in advance to be mindful of the time. At future events, YouthPower365 will attempt to provide simultaneous translation with headsets.

For future parent panels, YouthPower365 will be mindful of including a broader family experience representation, considering single parents, grandparents raising students, recent arrivals, and second-generation families. YouthPower365 will also prepare and ensure comfort with the panelists as well as the host school to share both challenges and successes. For the future, YouthPower365 will consider how to share the same information to families or other schools who couldn't attend, with possibilities including: recording the event, creating a takeaway handout, or offering a generic panel at a different time and location, not focused on any one school.

# Parent and Family Advocates

## Greeley Evans Weld County School District 6

### Greeley, CO



Greeley-Evans School District 6 has leveraged ESSER funds to support 22 Parent and Family Advocates (PAFA) located at each elementary, middle and K-8 schools. The focus of the PAFA role aligns with the vision of Innovation 2030 (I2030), the district's strategic plan, of D6 embracing authentic, meaningful, and collaborative relationships with families to sustain belonging and trust as partners in education. There are two strategic objectives within I2030 Strengthening Partnerships, one of the plan's focus areas:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive PK-13 partnership plan.
2. Develop and implement staff training (to develop capacity) to partner with families.



Those involved in the planning and implementation of the work included the D6 Family Center and a task force consisting of administrators, teachers, community members, and assistant superintendents to support the development of the strategic plan and training for PAFA's at each school. The Family Center also works regularly with community agencies to provide necessary resources to PAFA's so they can provide holistic support for families. PAFA's convene monthly at the Family Center to engage in professional development trainings. In partnership with community agencies, PAFA's receive information from various organizations at the monthly convenings to be better prepared to support families.

During the Fall of 2022, a total of three PAFA's participated in the "Elevating Your Role as a Family Engagement Liaison" online course provided by the Colorado Department of Education's Office of FSCP. Staff had the opportunity to take a deep dive into each of the National Family-School Partnership Standards and begin to connect their everyday work to D6's I2030 strategic plan. As their final capstone project, staff created a site-based plan focused on any standard they chose and began the implementation process at their building. Plans focused on different partnership standards linking to student outcomes, positive school climate, and overall school improvement. By the Spring of 2023, all PAFA's participated in the 10-module online learning as a group.

Reviewing course capstones from each PAFA helped evaluate their understanding of the work. This provided insight into the learning of staff members in building genuine relationships at the building level with families using the National Standards. Monthly reports are also gathered to view the number of referrals that are being made to various community agencies.

Advice includes sitting side by side with staff members as they complete the course so they feel supported with the work. Follow up with the capstone plans and support PAFAs with either implementation or presentation to their administrator. Another piece of advice is to use the P-12 FSCP Framework. The framework provides a starting point to focus on one or more partnership elements that your organization wants to work towards. The last piece of advice is to work closely with your community organizations to support the well-being of all families.

Standard 5 — Sharing Power

Essential Element 4 — Dedicate Necessary Resources

# Principal Chats

## Greeley Evans School District 6

### Greeley, CO



The goal of the Principal Chats was to create an open system by providing families with monthly opportunities to meet with the principal and school leadership to discuss topics, initiatives, and issues related to student learning at the school level. This connected to the goal Greeley-Evans District 6 (D6) set in collaboration with the Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) – to design and develop a comprehensive plan during the 2021-22 school year that will strengthen family partnerships.

Those involved varied by school but typically included a team of educators, staff members, family members, and community representatives. This varied group enabled the planning process to benefit from the collective perspectives they brought. One of the primary goals of the Principal Chats was to really hear from the families to identify common themes and design a family engagement program focused on what parents want and need. The practice also sought to build strong networks among families and communities and support families to develop and assert their role as leaders and agents of change.

Monthly chats provided a space for families to get to know the school administration and bring forward concerns and questions. The chats also aimed to build families' understanding of how the school system worked. Questions to families included: 1) Are your needs being met? 2) Are you comfortable attending events? 3) Are you able to communicate more with your child's teacher? and 4) Do you know about our key resources? The meeting format utilized both structure and openness to allow families to feel heard and understood. The chats also included topics families had previously expressed interest in. For example, Bella Romero Academy families expressed interest in both how they could better talk to their children about their feelings and accessing ESL support for parents.

The Principal Chats were evaluated through feedback from school staff and parents. Some schools also utilized family engagement surveys to better explore the needs and preferred topics of their families. This process helped the district gain a better understanding of the needs of the community. Families also hoped to continue the chats as well as participate in future opportunities. The success of the chats signaled a need for the district to continue making connections with families in different ways and to start seeing the leadership potential in all families.

Any district who wishes to utilize this program should have set goals for what the school needs to build trusting relationships with families. Purpose can include helping children and families, creating more enjoyment and learning, creating new opportunities for students to connect, or building open communication systems with families. Outreach is the X-factor that will make or break your Principal Chat efforts. How you connect with parents and caregivers leading up to and between the chats will shape what happens during these gatherings, and how these gatherings are perceived throughout the school community. Thorough planning will greatly support increased family engagement attendance.

# TWIGS Family Engagement Program

## Animas High School

### Durango, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

As a small charter school with about 200 students, Animas High School (AHS) relies upon families to ensure their success. Animas High School uses project-based learning to prepare students for college, career, and life. Parents and caregivers are actively involved in selecting AHS for their students from many options in the community. Families participate in school events regularly, including attending exhibitions of learning, chaperoning field trips and outdoor activities, helping serve lunch, and sharing expertise in classrooms. In the 22/23 school year, Animas High School designed a new family engagement program, TWIGS. TWIGS stands for Together We Inspire Great Students, and is metaphorically connected to the AHS school mascot, the Osprey. TWIGS' mission is to create meaningful connections among AHS families to collectively provide social, educational, and financial support for the school. Just as an intricately woven nest of twigs creates a safe and secure environment for the bird, AHS TWIGS supports and nurtures the school's students and staff.

TWIGS grew organically from a parent committee that participated in a recent AHS capital campaign that resulted in the construction of a brand new sustainably designed building on the Fort Lewis College campus. AHS families donated over \$159,000 to the campaign and those who served on the committee were interested in continuing to serve in a meaningful way. They met with the head of school and dean of community outreach to brainstorm a new vision for family engagement; one that would be inclusive, fun, and creative. A steering committee of TWIGS members met monthly to develop and implement plans. They named themselves the TWIGS Buds, playing off the metaphor further. The dean of community outreach served as the staff liaison for the group and coordinated their efforts.



TWIGS hosted a full calendar of initiatives and activities in the 22/23 school year, including welcome calls to new families; monthly coffees and happy hours; an AHS history hike with school founders; a nature photography hike; conversations about the shared book read, *Stolen Focus*; and events with the school counselor addressing teen mental health. They also initiated a gratitude campaign and teacher appreciation events to encourage families to acknowledge the extraordinary educators serving in the school. Having these events be driven by parents rather than staff modeled active engagement and encouraged others to get involved. This increased investment in the school among families, which opened communication pathways and strengthened the overall AHS school community.

The TWIGS Buds debriefed at the end of the year and reflected upon successes and areas for improvement. While TWIGS events were intentionally planned to take place at a variety of times and locations and to appeal to a variety of interests, it was still challenging for working families to carve out time to attend.

Those who wish to replicate this practice should know that parents and caregivers are your best resource when it comes to designing programs to engage families! Create a steering committee of parents who you know want to get more involved and pull upon the talents of your parent body. Ask families about their interests and skills to help you discover new ways you can connect parents to the classroom, inviting them in as experts. It also helps to forge authentic relationships that open communication between home and school, ultimately in support of the student.

Standard 5 — Sharing Power  
Essential Element 2 — Build Trusting Relationships

# Collaborating with the Englewood Chamber of Commerce Englewood Schools Englewood, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

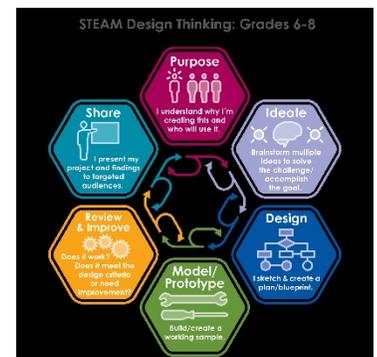
Englewood Schools has a strong and collaborative partnership with their local chamber of commerce. The District Family, School, and Community Partnership Liaison (FSCP) serves on the board of the Englewood Chamber of Commerce. This position holds multiple purposes. It allows a representative from the school district to give updates about the district while also looking for opportunities to collaborate with local community and business owners. In addition to participating in the monthly board meetings, the district also hosts Englewood Chamber of Commerce Coffee Networking Breakfasts at various Englewood schools. These events allow local business owners the chance to see all the amazing programming happening in the district while linking resources and support from the community to the schools. The Englewood Chamber of Commerce has been a continued source in creating lasting partnerships between Englewood Schools and the community.



While the District FSCP Liaison serves on the chamber of commerce board, she collaborates with district and school-based administrators to gather the details that they would like passed along to chamber business members. The liaison also works with these same administrators to present and share the big opportunities and outstanding programming that are available to Englewood students in this small, caring district. The Englewood Chamber of Commerce has toured and visited many of the Career and Technical Education programs at the high school level such as Cosmetology, SAGE (Sustainable Agriculture Green Energy), and Broadcast Journalism classes. In addition, they have also had the opportunity to see STEAM programming in action by playing alongside students programming Spheros and observing the Trout in Classroom program. Having the Englewood Chamber of Commerce Networking Breakfast events allows the district to invite community members into the buildings to see what makes the amazing schools so unique.



Each month at the Englewood Chamber of Commerce board meetings there is time set aside for the District Family, School, and Community Liaison to give an update about the school district to board members. Updates can include upcoming events, resources needed for the schools, as well as possible collaboration ideas. By participating in the chamber board meetings as well as hosting chamber of commerce events in schools, the district has been able to increase partnerships between the schools, local business owners, and the community. This partnership has created a culture that shows strong schools foster a strong community.



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



The school-hosted chamber events are measured in a quantitative manner by following the attendance rates. The collaboration with the Englewood Chamber of Commerce is mainly measured qualitatively by the connections made. Some challenges that have arose when collaborating with the local chamber and schools is making sure connections are made with the right people with the right resources and opportunities. Another challenge is making sure that there is follow-through on the school side once a connection is made.

Some advice the district would give when trying to collaborate with their local chamber of commerce is to be involved. Go to community events, create partnerships, and learn ways in which it would make sense for schools and businesses to be involved.

# Collaboration with Flying Pig Farm

## Manitou Springs School District 14

### Manitou Springs, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Manitou Springs School District 14 (MSSD14) prides itself in its ability to create and foster many community partnerships that have positive outcomes for students and families. One such partnership that has really grown during the 2022-2023 school year is a relationship with The Flying Pig Farm. MSSD14 has had an ongoing relationship with Flying Pig Farm as one of the main caretakers, Barak, was an educator in MSSD14 for several years. Barak used the farm as an alternative learning space for his middle school English Language Arts students. Students spent a couple days a week at Flying Pig



Farm for two blocks with the goal of engaging in reading and writing activities as well as carrying out tasks on the farm such as planting and gardening. Now, Barak works on the farm full-time and with this added time more students from MSSD14 have been able to interact with the farm's learning space and make a deep connection to the sourcing of food. Another way MSSD14 has leveraged this partnership is with the mental health team as they are able to take small groups of students and utilize the farm as a regulation space.

The planning and implementation of this practice began with Barak and district leadership. This has since expanded to include educators within all schools in the district. During the 2022-2023 school year, middle school students engaged in field trips and interdisciplinary lessons around the sourcing of food at the Flying Pig Farm. In addition, this natural environment was also used for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) groups to help facilitate student connections. Additional opportunities are offered to families as an extension of the school day through Connect 14 services in MSSD14, an after-school enrichment program.



At the middle school level, quarterly academic assessments are administered to help evaluate the effectiveness of the interdisciplinary practices between the school and the farm. This is an on-going process that allows for collaborative practices to evolve according to the needs of all stakeholders. This collaboration has been gradually building since 2016 and has become a more intentional process with interdisciplinary lessons and curriculum building between district staff, students, and the farm.

For those who would like to utilize a similar collaboration, consider using a phased approach when planning for a community collaboration. In MSSD14, this began with a small class of middle school students and occasional field trips for other students in the district. This has now grown to a more involved process for a variety of middle school students as they engage in on-going interdisciplinary lessons and SEL groups. In addition, the connections within the district have grown to include the Mental Health Team, curriculum building with high school teachers, and more field trips for students at a variety of grade levels.



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

# Community Partnerships at Hamilton Middle School

## Hamilton Middle School

### Denver, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Hamilton Middle School is a Title 1 school located in Southeast Denver serving nearly 650 students in 6th-8th grade. More than 65% of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, over 70% identify as a race other than White, 48% are multilingual learners, and 15% have Individualized Education Programs (IEP). Hamilton Middle School has partnered with community organizations to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for both students and families, in alignment with the school's vision of serving the Whole Child, Every Child. To gather insight into the needs of the community, Hamilton Middle School utilized school surveys with students, families, and staff. Based on the findings, a plan was developed to support opportunities in four areas: Student Enrichment, School Culture, Family Resources, and Family and Community Engagement.



To support student enrichment Hamilton Middle School partnered with over 15 different community organizations. For example, Right at School provided after-school homework help, tutoring, sports, and STEAM activities to over 60 students. The Colorado Mountain Club sponsored a conservation club where students experienced outdoor adventures, learned about wildlife, and attended a hiking field trip. African American Young Ladies Summit (AAYLS) empowered female students of color with tools to create a lifelong journey of personal success and achievement. Other stakeholders included Sims Fayola, Breakthrough Kent, GESTEM, and Optimist Club of Monaco South. To promote stronger family engagement,

Hamilton Middle School partnered with local businesses and organizations to bring resources and opportunities to families. Through these partnerships, Hamilton Middle School was able to provide a series of Healthy Food and Cooking Workshops for families through Veggie RX, a High School Night for families to meet feeder high schools and ask questions, basic needs support with Denver Health Dental Sealant and Immunization in-school clinic days, and clothing for students through Clothes to Kids Denver and GGirl's Closet.

Stakeholders collected data through surveys to gauge the continued interest in the program and to collect feedback for improvements. Hamilton Middle School used this data to improve and grow the programs for next year. Qualitatively, families are requesting more of these opportunities in the future. The second-semester Veggie RX class was full and had a waitlist. The DPS Spark program grew from providing one field trip opportunity a month to providing two field trips a month. Next year there are plans to add a College Day for 8th-grade students in partnership with SPARK and open DCC to the public and neighboring schools. Some programs have capacity limits and waitlists which has been a challenge, so Hamilton Middle School plans to double the number of opportunities for the DPS Spark program and build engagement momentum in the community by opening these opportunities to neighboring schools as well.



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

Hamilton Middle School plans to continue to reach out to community partners that will enrich the diverse community and provide a space for equitable connection, collaboration, and interaction to further improve educational outcomes for students. The goal is to continue to gather feedback from the community to be able to provide an even stronger web of resources for the 2023-2024 school year. Advice to those who want to implement a Community Partnership Program is to focus on one need at a time and reach out to community partners for a helping hand. Consider your school's goals and how your community partnership can assist in filling any gaps. There are many community partners wanting to help; they just need to know how.





## COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER

The goal of the Community Resource Center (CRC) was to supplement resources for families in District 49, specifically food and clothing. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the district was provided the opportunity to give out food boxes. However, the minimum the district could take was 160 and there was concern the

boxes would not be picked up. To everyone's surprise all the boxes were gone within the first 20 minutes. This showed the district there was a strong need for food, specifically healthy food. District 49 partnered with Care and Share, a local food bank, through many different avenues (food boxes, Mobile Market, and now, sustainable food pantry on campus). With ESSER funds and the support of the superintendent, District 49 was able to secure a location and purchase a refrigerator, freezer, racks, flooring, and storage. Local community groups painted, sorted clothes, unboxed, and displayed items, and volunteered when the Community Resource Center opened.

The assistant superintendent acknowledged there was a need for these resources, specifically in the feeder pattern of schools. He was able to find a space to dedicate to the center. The Title 1 and ESSER office provided guidance, resources, input and feedback on the planning and implementation of the center. The district also worked with partners at Care and Share for the supply of food and different food programs available in the area. The district social workers, Title 1 Family Engagement Liaisons, and school counselors were integral in spreading the word about the food pantry and alerting the center about families in need of clothing.

The Community Resource Center is available to students and families to break down basic need barriers so that students can focus on being in school and learning. Schools that are lacking snacks can pick up from the center to support student success in school as well. Students that are not adequately clothed for school run the risk of getting sick or not being able to walk to school in inclement weather. The CRC is there to provide these two critical components of life when families are unable to do so themselves.

The CRC successfully fed approximately 60 families every other week in its inaugural two months of being open. The CRC surveyed families initially to see what kind of food they would like access to as well as hours of operation to maximize the number of families the center could help. The pantry is consistently utilized and most of the food is gone at the end of the day. Some challenges have included figuring out how much food to bring in each week, how to advertise to non-school associated community members, and maintaining a solid group of volunteers to staff the center. There has also been an outpouring of clothing donations, and the amount of space available to store the clothes has grown smaller.

For districts hoping to replicate this program, be sure you can handle the capacity of what you are starting. Purchase a bigger refrigerator, freezer, and more shelving than you think you will need. Sand Creek Zone Community Liaison, Lauren Stuart, shared, "It doesn't have to be perfect to start. You don't need the signs, the logo, the perfect place to support families. Start small and improve as you go."

# Elevate Englewood Collaboration

## Englewood School District

### Englewood, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Elevate Englewood is a city-wide group made up of citizens who are learning about the different local power structures in the city (city departments, school district, and schools). Members were invited by the district to help brainstorm ideas specifically around student enrollment and ways to create more opportunities for community involvement. The program also sought feedback on how to share information with the community about the great things happening within the schools. Englewood School District is experiencing declining enrollment and they sought to tap into the community to brainstorm ways to share information about choice enrollment and what makes the small district so unique with its small community feel.



The school board president, superintendent, DAC co-chairs, district community liaison, and the district instructional technology coordinator all helped lead the design thinking in collaboration with the city manager of Englewood, who formed the Elevate Englewood group. The collaboration included using the design thinking process (mind mapping) with the group around four essential questions.

1. What type of communication would be beneficial from Englewood Schools to promote the district/schools and reach new families?
2. How should we best communicate with the greater Englewood community that does not have children (i.e., which platforms)?
3. What types of stories are important for community members to hear from the school district?
4. What are the potential volunteer opportunities to bring Elevate Englewood into our school communities?

The process is simple, yet brilliant! Mind mapping is a protocol often used in the classroom. Four posters were placed around the room (one poster per question), and participants rotated through each poster. During the rotation, participants silently reflected on the question and then wrote an idea/response on a sticky note and added the note to the poster. This occurred at each poster for two-three minutes each. Next, participants were assigned to posters and asked to categorize all the ideas into general themes. For example, some sticky notes said, "increase presence on Facebook", "Instagram" and/or "create more Twitter posts." Those stickies would be sorted into a "Social Media" themed group. This part of the protocol was critical to the organization of everyone's ideas. This was where collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication really flourished. After, participants heard a brief summary of each group's approach to organizing. Finally, each participant went around the room and voted on two themes per question/poster that they felt would best address the question. This gave those leading the activity very clear next steps that honored the participants' thinking and ideas.

After reviewing the top two choices for each question, the model moved into the design phase. During the design phase, each group looked at the top two "solutions" to the challenge question and designed a plan associated with the solution. In that plan, the team considered several factors, including the implementation plan, timeline of project, budget, and a contingency plan (if needed). The district acknowledges that the biggest challenge is the implementation and follow through



Standard 6 — Collaborating with the Community  
Essential Element 3 — Design Capacity-Building Opportunities



of these ideas. They wonder how they can be sure they get the right people on board to lead the right parts of the project. Execution of each plan will require collaboration, careful budgeting, and detailed logistics to ensure its success.

The advice Englewood School District gives to other districts trying to replicate this practice is to connect and build relationships with your community members. Stronger schools mean stronger communities and stronger communities mean stronger schools. It is truly a symbiotic relationship that is mutually beneficial for the community and the school. Listening, gathering input, and adjusting how you connect will make your school district stronger.



It began with a stakeholder's report that was compiled before Dr. Diana Jones and Luis Murillo took over Alamosa School District as Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent. As a result, listening sessions were conducted with parents, staff, and community members. After these listening sessions as well as stakeholder meetings were complete, a strategic plan and blueprint for the future was created. Three focus areas were identified including high-quality student-centered learning, healthy students and staff, and partnerships with families. These partnerships should include meaningful, impactful communication and creating leadership roles in Alamosa Schools for parents and family members that mirror the demographics of the community.

Superintendent, Diana Jones, Assistant Superintendent, Luis Murillo, District MTSS Coordinator, Jamie Madigan, Family Engagement Coordinator, Courtney Vigil, and community members, Jamie and Cristalray Dominguez, were all integral in the creation of the Family Center. Alamosa School District entered into a partnership with Shooting Stars Cultural and Leadership Center to open the Family Center. The Family Center is located at 807 Ross Avenue, Alamosa, CO, with the hope to provide a space to empower students and families.



The Family Center is a one-stop shop for families who have questions when navigating the Alamosa School District. With the help of technology, the Family Center will offer bilingual services to drive student achievement and long-term success for all students. The Family Center also offers bilingual parent education classes such as Familias Fuertes/Strengthening Families; Path to Scholarships; English to Spanish and Spanish to English language classes; as well as PowerSchool assistance, internet to register students, check and report attendance, and check grades. The center seeks to provide foundational support to help families navigate the school system and ensure sustainability and long-term success. To further their family engagement work, Alamosa School District also hired its first ever district-wide Family Engagement Coordinator, whose office is located at the Family Center. Alamosa School District also began to hold an intentional monthly meeting with community partners to strategize ways to support students and their families. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the district saw a great need to reignite their partnerships with key players in the community such as: Shooting Stars, Boys and Girls Club, Center for Restorative Programs, Wraparound, LaPuente, Adelante, San Luis Valley Behavioral Health Group, Alamosa Library, Early Childhood Council, and the Joint Oversight Group.

The new Family Center did not open until May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, therefore there was not enough programming to evaluate the program fully. Next year the Family Center plans to focus on intentional two-way communication with staff, students, and their families. One of the biggest challenges getting the center up and running was bringing all the moving pieces together to make it happen.

The best advice the district can provide to others hoping to open a center is to partner with people and districts that have gone through similar trials and tribulations. Always listen to students and families to ensure you are meeting the needs of your community based on their feedback and not just what you "think" your community needs.

Standard 6 — Collaborate with Community  
Essential Element 4 — Dedicate Necessary Resources

# Husky Hub

## Heiman Elementary School

### Evans, CO



Greeley Evans Weld County School District 6 has a mission to establish a school community where all students and their families do not have to worry about having enough food, therefore eliminating hunger in the district. This goal is in part being accomplished by teaming up with the district's Nutrition Services Department. The goal was to utilize the left-over food from the school day, package it, and provide it to families in need, thus helping to eliminate food waste and hunger.



Anne Ramirez, the principal at Heiman Elementary School, dedicated a room in the campus portables to house the program. Heiman Elementary was proud to partner with Nutrition Services and established a pantry at the school for families in need. Nutrition Services provided a refrigerator, freezer, and all the necessary shelving. Nicole Cox, a first-grade teacher at Heiman Elementary, added to this concept and worked to provide a space where families could have free access to a washing machine and dryer. She partnered with United Way who graciously provided the school with a laundry facility. When there were a few challenges connecting the washer and dryer to the school's existing electrical and ventilation system, United Way stepped up again and provided the money to make this a reality. Stephanie Mora, a CDL teacher at Heiman, furthered this concept by working to offer diapers to families. She also partnered with United Way and Heiman Elementary became an approved distribution site for the Covering Weld Diaper Bank, providing free diapers, wipes, and ointment to families.



The families at Heiman Elementary were so grateful for the services they wanted to pay it forward. They began donating their gently used children's clothing, thus adding a clothing bank. Through these services the Husky Hub was born. This year Heiman Elementary also received a \$5000 grant from the Supplemental Colorado Food Pantry Assistance program to aid in providing families with fresh meat, vegetables, and fruit as well as keeping the pantry stocked with non-perishable food items. It is because of these partnerships that Heiman Elementary has been able to service families in an extraordinary way.

Heiman Elementary sees this program as a way for families to help other families. Families can take what they need and pay it forward with what they can donate. The program is evaluated by direct feedback from families as well as seeing where the needs of families continue to be. The biggest challenge getting the program started was finding the money for the washer and dryer hook-ups and finding a way to keep the pantry restocked. However, the generous partnerships formed with the community helped solve these problems.

The advice Heiman Elementary would give to other schools who wish to replicate this program would be to have patience; it will not happen all at once. The Husky Hub has been in the planning and implementation stages for almost a year. It took a village to make this dream a reality and has been a lot of hard work but with a passionate staff, helping all families is possible.

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

# International Night: A Community Celebration

## Everitt Middle School

### Wheat Ridge, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

The Wheat Ridge area schools are a community that over the years has been strengthened and committed to creating an environment of unity and learning. Students, staff, families, and community partners have worked hard to create unforgettable learning events in Wheat Ridge. Wheat Ridge community schools strive to highlight diversity, equity, and inclusion within the community and be part of the #bettertogether movement advocating for strong and innovative communities. These schools serve a diverse population of families, each with their own strengths and abilities that enhance the community. Therefore, the goal of International Night was to promote inclusivity, diversity, and equity while strengthening relationships among families, students, staff, and the community.



For the third consecutive year, area schools: Kullerstrand, Wilmore-Davis, Stevens, Stober, Prospect Valley, and Wheat Ridge High school collaborated with Everitt Middle School to create a night of learning and celebration of cultures, called International Night: A Community Celebration. A representative from each school and the PTA met monthly to plan what is considered to be the best event in the community.

International Night is an event that represents unity, commitment, and strength. This event is a collaboration of families, school staff, and students from each school. Representing their story in a series of presentation tables, each shared their beautiful culture and traditions with the community. International Night also provides the opportunity to collaborate with area businesses and restaurants that share their rich and diverse food with the community. Service organizations that played a very important role in making this a successful event included the Rotary, Kiwanis, and Optimist Clubs.

Subsequently, this community event started as a Project Based/Problem Based Learning (PBL) created by the Spanish teacher and the Family Engagement Liaison during the 2019-2020 school year at Everitt Middle School. The event was originally led by the Spanish classes and then expanded with the collaboration of community members over the years. The original goal was to connect students with the community and help students understand the importance of being bilingual in today's world. As the event grew it encouraged the community to learn from each other, celebrate everyone's story, and create strong bonds within the community. The success and implementation of the program is evaluated by student, family, and community participation. However, the program will need to look at a larger event space due to the high number of participants.



This is a great practice to bring the community together and create strong relationships among students, families, and staff. It is crucial to create a planning committee that represents all voices in the community. This committee needs to focus on a goal that reflects the diversity, equity, and inclusion of the community. It is essential that the committee starts having these conversations at the beginning of the school year and share common responsibilities. This will allow for changes as needed and the creation of more creative ideas along the way.

Standard 6 — Collaborating with the Community  
Essential Element 1— Create an Inclusive Culture

# Meetings with Weld County Child Welfare Greeley Evans Weld County School District 6 Greeley, CO



This year the district engaged for the first time in a practice that has greatly benefitted highly mobile students in foster care. The goal of the regular meetings was to open a channel to discuss the mutual needs of Greeley-Evans District 6 and Weld County Child Welfare, all under the theme of supporting students and their cases to encourage educational stability. Students in foster care or other out-of-home placements, due to their high mobility, have several needs not encountered by students who are not highly mobile. This includes a large number of frequently changing adult support team members whose contact information must be up to date at the school, rights to immediate enrollment and education rights, needs for transportation when changing homes, or needs for wraparound or outside services.

In the summer of 2022, a liaison supporting students in foster care, kinship care, or other out of home placements began engaging with the designated education contact at Weld County Child Welfare to discuss needs arising for specific students. After several meetings on a variety of topics, both sides agreed it would be mutually beneficial to have a monthly check-in meeting with the objective of addressing student needs and increasing inter-organizational understanding by sharing policies, procedures, and similar information.

A number of unexpected benefits came from these regular meetings. First, the relationship between the school district and the Child Welfare department of Weld County was strengthened. Individuals from both organizations began to get in touch with impromptu needs outside of the regular meeting. For example, when a school reached out to the liaison with questions on the status of a student in foster care regarding continued attendance and enrollment, the liaison was able to connect with the Child Welfare education contact to confirm the child's placement for better insight on how to advise the school. Second, the regular meeting clarified single points of contact and their roles for each respective organization. An example of this included county caseworkers starting to reach out to the district liaison for assistance with logistical items needed to support students to continue their education such as transportation or school supplies which removed the need to utilize other less-appropriate avenues (such as a BID meeting) for more efficient communication and service to students.

Both sides have expressed the meetings have been beneficial. The county has noted appreciation for the improved working relationship and fields questions to the school district about student needs more frequently. Additionally, the district has relied on the same close relationship to verify student placement status with the county to troubleshoot issues faced by some students such as needs around student records, resource provision, or other similar issues.

The meetings are planned to continue into the coming school year as they present a clear and dedicated opportunity for both organizations to make their needs known to the other. For districts wishing to engage in this practice, it should be noted that county Departments of Human Services have a designated education contact who should be able to be a resource to increase support for schools to assist students who are in out-of-home placements. Keep an open mind about what the collaborative relationship will look like and commit to the regular meeting time to demonstrate respect for county partners and the knowledge and expertise they bring.

# Summer Resource Fair O'Dea Elementary School Fort Collins, CO



The goal of the Summer Resource Fair was to connect Spanish speaking and low-income families to low cost and free enriching summer resources. One very important population that the Summer Resource Fair targeted was McKinney-Vento families – families who are unhoused or whose housing is insecure. Over the summer, without school in session, these families have significantly less access to resources.

In order to plan and implement the Summer Resource Fair, the school counselor and family liaison worked together to create a check list. This included developing a list of community agencies and families to invite; supplies needed; meeting with the principal to get the layout approved; and connecting with other family liaisons, school counselors, and McKinney-Vento contacts throughout Poudre School District. The tasks were divided up between one family liaison, two school counselors, and two district advocates. On the day of the event, families were welcomed into the library for light refreshments and mingling. The families then moved into the gym to visit the community agency booths. The booths were staffed by agencies, and they were each paired with a bilingual family liaison. The families were given a passport to receive a stamp at each station, and then at the end of the night, they turned it in to be entered into a raffle.

The program aimed to connect families directly to summer resources in a timely manner, before summer opportunities filled up. Additionally, several family liaisons provided feedback on specific resources that families previously requested and those agencies were prioritized. The agencies that attended included: Poudre Public Library, Rec Center, Food Bank, AlphaBEST, Boys and Girls Club, Early Childhood Education, ECCL, Reading Resources, and PSD Nutrition. Connecting parents to summer resources in early April gave parents the opportunity to start planning and connecting to resources that would provide an enriching and active summer for their students.

This event was evaluated by feedback from staff, families, and agencies. Agencies were quick to volunteer for more events like the resource fair and they relayed how excited and engaged families were. Before leaving, families stopped by their respective family liaisons to share the new information they learned and ask any final questions. Staff commented on the huge turnout from several different elementary schools and one middle school. Although overall the feedback was very positive, the biggest challenge was connecting and coordinating with agencies.

The biggest tool used in creating successful parent engagement was relying on the relationships parents already had with staff. Each family had been invited first by either their family liaison or school counselor two weeks before the event and then reminded of the invite the night before. Parents already had a preexisting relationship with staff, and this made the invitation more meaningful and individualized. Thus, enlisting staff that already have connections with families to invite them creates the highest turnout. Additionally, at the event, school counselors and family liaisons gave background information on agencies and caught up with families in person. The passport given out to families at the beginning of the night also allowed families to visit each booth without any embarrassment and provided structure and talking points to families who were unsure about what resources were available.

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

For more information and  
partnering materials:

## SACPIE

[www.cde.state.co.us/sacpie](http://www.cde.state.co.us/sacpie)

## CDE

[cde.state.co.us/familyengagement](http://cde.state.co.us/familyengagement)

## Questions

Darcy Hutchins

Director of Family, School  
and Community Partnerships  
[hutchins\\_d@cde.state.co.us](mailto:hutchins_d@cde.state.co.us)



State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education