



Promising Partnerships Practices

2025

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



SACPIE

State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education



COLORADO
Department of Education



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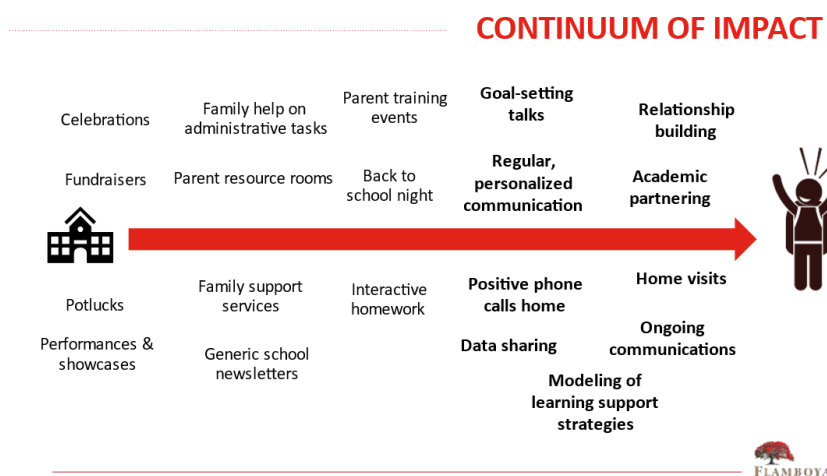


Introduction

The State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) are pleased to share this 11th 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 60 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 almost 70 practices categorized by the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2022) and Colorado's Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP) Framework (CDE, 2020).

Several themes emerged in this year's compilation of practices. Like last year, the most prevalent theme was collaborating with the community. Unlike in years past, many practices elevated students' voices in FSCP, mentioned having an intentional FSCP team, and linking engagement practices to the Unified Improvement Plan. These new themes align with the Office of FSCP's new [Trail Map for Schools](#). Each year more practices fall along the "high impact" side of the FSCP continuum.



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

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

A Hub of Family Engagement and Student Success

Discovery High School, Widefield School District 3

Submitted by Dr. Albert Wiggins, wigginsalbert@wsd3.org

During the 2024–2025 school year, Discovery High School (DHS), part of Widefield School District 3, set a goal to strengthen student outcomes through increased family and community engagement. DHS aimed to host at least six major engagement events throughout the year. These events were aligned with the district’s Unified Improvement Plan and supported by the Connect with Widefield Family, School, and Community Partnership (FSCP) initiative to foster student success and build a positive school climate.

Planning and implementation efforts were led by DHS leadership in collaboration with teachers, support staff, students, and parent volunteers. Community partners and district representatives also contributed to event logistics, promotion, and execution.



DHS launched the year with “Let’s Taco ’Bout Discovery,” an event where families met staff, learned about programs, and shared a meal. This was followed by a festive, student-led Haunted House, which showcased creativity and leadership while providing a safe, family-friendly celebration. Later, DHS hosted a Movie Night and a Bowling Night, both designed to foster community spirit and informal school-family interaction. The school year culminated in a powerful Community Emergency Preparedness Fair, led by students who earned their CERT (Community Emergency Response Team)

certifications, connecting learning with real-world impact. These events contributed to measurable increases in family participation, student attendance, academic engagement, and the overall school climate.

Evaluation of these practices was primarily qualitative, based on attendance counts, feedback surveys, and observed increases in family communication and student engagement. The school also tracked improvement in student attendance and course completion rates. One challenge was coordinating scheduling to accommodate diverse family availability, which DHS addressed by varying the timing and format of events. Future evaluations will include structured surveys and student outcome data linked to engagement metrics.

For schools looking to replicate this practice, start by building strong internal collaboration and involving families early in the planning process. “When families feel welcomed and heard, they become true partners in student success,” shared a DHS staff member. The key is creating events that are inclusive, meaningful, and connected to learning outcomes.



Community Maps

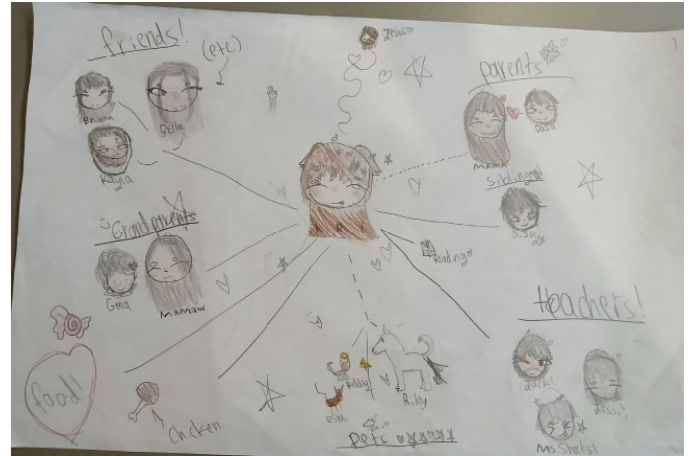
Sunrise Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Isabela Bernal, ibernal@cherrycreekschools.org

At Sunrise Elementary School in Cherry Creek School District, a commitment to honoring the diverse experiences of students and families is central to school culture. Recognizing that many students are supported by a network beyond the traditional definition of family, the school implemented a Community Mapping activity as an alternative to the family tree project. This practice aimed to validate the lived experiences of students and foster a sense of belonging.

Planning and implementation were led by the school's Community Liaison and Instructional Coach. Inspired by Nawal Qarooni's *Nourishing Caregiver*

Collaborations, this activity encouraged students to think about the individuals who shaped their lives (biological or not) and gave them an opportunity to showcase their personal community. Qarooni notes that for students without strong connections to biological parents or past generations, the family tree project can feel frustrating and isolating. Community Mapping offered a validating and empowering space for students to represent their lived experiences.



Teachers introduced the activity by reading a book that explores themes of family or community, followed by a class discussion using a circle map to help students define what “community” means to them. In class students began creating visual representations of their networks by drawing, labeling and connecting key figures in their lives using lines, symbols or photos. Students took the maps home to complete with a caregiver. Some families added printed photos, while others created digital versions. Some students created expansive maps featuring parents, siblings, cousins, teachers, neighbors, pastors and friends. Others had simpler maps with just a few key connections like a beloved pet and a close friend. Every map was a powerful window into a student's world. The finished Community Maps were displayed proudly at the annual Sunrise Food Festival, a celebration of culture, community, and connection.

Evaluation of the practice included teacher reflections, student feedback, and observations during the Food Festival. One notable challenge was ensuring that all families understood the purpose of the activity and felt confident participating, especially those unfamiliar with such school projects. Supportive communication and translation helped overcome this challenge.

When replicating this practice, it's helpful to intentionally create space for students to explore and share their unique support systems. Begin with literature that highlights diverse family and community structures to build understanding and spark discussion. Providing clear instructions, sample maps, and guiding questions, along with translated materials, encourages meaningful participation from all families. Showcasing the completed maps in a community event helps affirm students' identities and reinforces connections between home and school.



Family Connect Home Visit Program

Denver Public Schools

Submitted by Paula Keenan, Paula_keenan@dpsk12.net

Denver Public Schools (DPS) staff believe every student deserves to thrive, and that starts with strong families. The FACE Family Connect (FFC) Program, created by two social workers and founded in 2019, empowers families by helping them connect with crucial resources. These multi-generational strategies remove barriers, allowing families to engage deeply with their children's education. Families enter the FACE Family Connect program through referrals from school social workers or psychologists, who expertly identify those with intensive needs and can precisely gauge necessary supports. The home-based model is crucial, allowing for deep, personal engagement with parents and guardians. This approach provides an unparalleled understanding of family dynamics, environment, existing strengths, and specific needs.

The intention of FFC is capacity-building, equipping families with the essential skills to proactively prevent crises or confidently navigate future challenges. Program staff prioritize cultivating positive family-school relationships, forging vital bridges of communication, and delivering the highest standard of customer service to both families and the schools they serve.

The primary tool used for evaluation is a fourteen category itemized matrix 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, children's 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 were satisfied with services, and if they plan to continue referring to the program. It also elicits qualitative data through open-ended questions which supports future planning.

One recommendation to effectively replicate this practice is to exclusively employ licensed master's level school social workers. Their clinical expertise is invaluable for assessment and intervention, and their deep knowledge of the school system is crucial for helping families navigate its intricacies. Another is to establish well-defined program boundaries and evaluation methods. This clarity is essential for demonstrating the program's positive influence on family stability.

"You all are an amazing group of professionals! Thank you for supporting parents in such tangible and meaningful ways. I trust you all 100% to build rapport with families and you always seem to contribute to the success of students through your support of the parents"

-School Partner

Family Lunch Events

Las Animas Elementary School, Las Animas School District

Submitted by Lana Gardner, lane.gardner@la-schools.net

Las Animas School District (LASD) is considered a high needs district with 83% of students qualifying for Free/Reduced lunch, 17% in Special Education, and approximately 15% living with grandparents or other caregivers. LASD strives to create, maintain, and sustain meaningful partnerships with students and their families. At Las Animas Elementary School (LAES), each student and their family participates in a home visit with a school staff member before the start of school and over 90% of students and families participate in a progress conference twice per year. Family Lunch Events are a next step to nurture and expand the partnerships between staff and families, with the goal to increase the comfort of trusted adults at school and the transparency and approachability of school staff.

The LAES Principal, Family Advocate, Administrative Assistant, Wellness Coordinator, and Cafeteria Staff all worked together to plan Family Lunch Events. Stronger Connection Grant funds paid for the events in the spring of 2025. Future Family Lunch Events will be funded using Parent Involvement Funds.

Each Wednesday, every student in one grade level (K-6th) invited a trusted adult to join them for lunch at school at no cost. For example, Kindergarten Family lunch was held on Wednesday, January 15, 2025. Each child invited one adult to eat with them for free by taking home a ticket one week in advance. RSVPs helped staff plan accordingly. Students were encouraged to invite parents, grandparents, siblings, neighbors or any other trusted adult. Upon arrival, guests gathered in a school common area and received a personal welcome from school staff, including the principal or family advocate. As the students came in from recess and lined up for lunch, their adult joined them in line and shadowed the child's lunchtime experience.



Family Lunch Events were evaluated based on participation percentage and informal feedback. Over the 14 events this spring, LAES averaged over 65% participation weekly. In order to support students that did not have family participation, school and district staff and volunteers joined the event. Some parents had personal anxieties around the social setting in the cafeteria. They picked up their children and took them out for lunch rather than staying.

Many adults left with comments such as “Thank you for having us, this was awesome. Let us know when you do this again.” Grandparents were especially tickled at the opportunity.

Folkloric Ballet Program

Chappelow Arts Magnet School, Greeley-Evans School District 6

Submitted by Julia Madera, jmadera3@greeleyschools.org

Chappelow K-8 in Evans, CO recognizes the value of programs that promote diversity and inclusivity, encouraging students to appreciate and respect cultural differences. The goal of the after-school Folkloric Ballet program was to celebrate and preserve Mexican cultural heritage while cultivating a sense of community and pride among students. Through the art of folkloric Mexican ballet, students not only learned to dance but also gained insight into the history and significance of these dances. The program provided a platform for students to showcase their talent and build confidence.

The Folkloric Ballet after-school program was brought to life with the dedication and teamwork of key individuals who worked together to make it a success. Two staff members took the lead in creating and implementing the program. The SE Assistant coordinated the choreographies, selected the music, and managed the attires, ensuring each performance was culturally authentic and visually stunning. The Parent and Family Advocate handled the logistics, planning, and coordination of events, managing all backstage activities.

The first Folkloric Ballet performance took place during the Day of the Dead celebration, followed by another presentation at the holiday Posada in December. Both performances were met with overwhelming praise, with the school community providing fantastic feedback. The performances attracted over 150 family members. Since these events, the program has grown significantly, with more students eager to join. What began with just 10 participants has evolved into 80 dancers, making it one of the most beloved programs in the school. The program has not only increased student outcomes by encouraging cultural awareness, discipline, and teamwork but has also created a sense of belonging and pride within the school community.



Creating this program comes with challenges, particularly in planning, funding, and securing rehearsal space. One of the biggest obstacles was having enough money to purchase traditional attire, accessories and clothes, which were essential for the performances. Staff worked hard to find creative solutions, including reaching out to the school community for support and repurposing and crafting costumes. Additionally, scheduling conflicts made it difficult to reserve rehearsal space and required a lot of coordination from the school staff.

Advice for anyone wanting to replicate this program is to step out of your comfort zone and not let fear of failure stop you from pursuing something you're passionate about. As one of the planners said, "Create something you believe in, and always remember the people you are doing it for."



From Day One: Building Connections for Newcomer Families

Newcomer Center at Thornton High School, Adams 12 Five Star Schools

Submitted by A'ndra Warren, andra.n.warren@adams12.org

NEWCOMER CENTER at Thornton High School

The goal of the Personalized Intake Process at the Newcomer Center at Thornton High School was to create an immediate sense of belonging and connection for newly arrived students and their families. Recognizing the importance of a warm welcome, the process aimed to ensure each family has a meaningful introduction to the school community while addressing unique needs and backgrounds. This initiative aligned with the school's commitment to inclusivity and fostering a supportive environment, especially for immigrant and refugee families.

The planning and implementation of the practice involved the Student Support Team and other staff members. The team collaboratively developed a process that personalized the experience for each family, ensuring they felt seen, heard, and valued from day one.

The intake process began with a personalized meeting where families connected directly with a staff member or interpreter who spoke their language. This one-on-one interaction helped build trust and provided a space for families to share important information about the student, such as interests, preferred names, and unique stories. Immediately following the intake, the students' teachers received a welcome email, sharing these details to help staff build relationships and support each student more effectively. Importantly, using students' preferred names rather than legal names acknowledges cultural practices outside the U.S. and is inclusive to LGBTQ+ students, eliminating the need for them to explain or change their identity upon arrival. Communication was primarily conducted through text and phone calls, recognizing that these methods were more accessible for many families than email.

The practice was evaluated through ongoing feedback from families and teachers, as well as observing the students' integration into the school community. One challenge was ensuring timely communication across all involved parties, particularly with varying schedules and language barriers.

For those looking to replicate this practice, the team advises prioritizing relationship-building and responsiveness to families' preferred communication methods. As one team member shared, "A genuine connection from the first day makes a lasting impact on a student's sense of belonging and their family's trust in the school." Consistency and personalization are key to creating an authentic welcome.



Multicultural and Heritage Festival

Columbine Elementary School, Boulder Valley School District

Submitted by Carolina Oquelis de Lau, carolina.oquelisdelau@bvsd.org

Columbine Elementary School is located in the Boulder Valley School District and serves approximately 400 students. It is recognized for its diverse student body. In April 2025, the school hosted the Multicultural and Heritage Festival with the goal of celebrating the rich cultural diversity within the school and strengthening school community relationships.



Columbine Elementary
School

The entire Columbine Community actively contributed to organizing the Multicultural and Heritage Festival. Teachers, staff, students, and parent volunteers collaborated closely. It was a combined effort to bring the event to life to ensure a vibrant celebration of cultural diversity.

The Multicultural and Heritage Festival featured food booths where families and staff shared traditional dishes, offering delicious culinary delights that highlighted the variety of flavors from around the world. Cultural performances, including Baile Folklorico, African drumming, African dance, and salsa classes, provided dynamic entertainment where many people participated. Interactive cultural booths, managed by parents and teachers, allowed attendees to participate in hands-on activities, learn about different traditions, and engage in art and craft projects. The collaborative nature of the event encouraged teamwork and communication among students, staff, and families, strengthening community bonds. Participating in the festival also provided students with opportunities to express themselves creatively and develop new skills. The Multicultural and Heritage Festival not only enriched the students' educational experience but also positively impacted the school's climate by creating an environment that values diversity and fosters a sense of belonging.

The Multicultural and Heritage Festival was evaluated through feedback from teachers, staff, parents, and students. Everyone shared joy around the strong turnout for this festival and how much they enjoyed the variety of food from more than ten different countries. They faced a few challenges during the festival with the sound system, as the speakerphone lacked sufficient power to amplify music effectively in the designated performance area. Additionally, the event attracted more attendees than anticipated, leading to a shortage of plates.

To replicate a successful event, initiate planning at least three months ahead. Begin with booking performers and coordinate logistics. Engage families early by providing information on volunteer opportunities and cultural representation. Create flyers and digital communication to promote the event and encourage participation.

Open House Game Nights

Las Animas Junior High & High School, Las Animas School District

Submitted by Joshua Japhet, joshua.japhet@la-schools.net

The goal for Las Animas Junior High and High School hosting open house game nights was to increase engagement from families & students at the beginning and the end of the year. The main goal of Game Nights was to get students and families interacting positively with school staff to build trusting relationships. The game nights provided an opportunity for informal conversations over a meal and game.

Because of a smaller percentage of engagement with the general “open house” night, the school principal brainstormed other ideas to drive engagement. One idea was for a Bingo Night in replacement of the traditional open house. The Building Leadership Team (BLT) discussed this idea and immediately started planning Bingo Night with dinner. The success of the Bingo Night in the Fall led to the BLT implementing another Open House Game Night in the Spring with La Loteria Night for Cinco De Mayo.



Both Open House Game Nights (Bingo Night & La Loteria Night) included all Junior High and High School staff. The night began with dinner for families and staff and the games running for over two hours. Staff shifted throughout the night from table to table to drive engagement with a variety of families. With the increase of engagement from students and their families, staff were able to have many informal and formal conversations. These events also provided an informal setting for relationships between staff and students to be seen by families.

This year, staff evaluated the Game Nights through attendance. However, the planning committee is already discussing how families can provide more intentional feedback in the future. The main challenge of Game Nights was finding an open date early and later in the year at the Junior High and High School to ensure all students and families had the opportunity to attend.

Advice to those looking to implement the practice would be to begin the planning stage early and break up responsibilities to ensure tasks are completed, but also to minimize stress levels. Using a game that people are familiar with was very important for Las Animas Junior and High School, and a large amount of prizes were donated by community partnerships which all helped to drive not only engagement, but also excitement around the events.

Redesigned Back to School Night

Crestview Elementary School, Boulder Valley School District

Submitted by Katie FitzCallaghan, katie.fitzcallaghan@bvsd.org



Crest View Elementary in Boulder redesigned its Back to School Night by integrating it with the beloved Fall Festival, a celebration organized by the PTO. This innovative approach aimed to create a more relaxed, comprehensive experience, fostering an inclusive tone for the academic year. The objectives were to enhance family engagement, specifically with Latinx families, and to create an effective platform for community building and information sharing.

Discussions for the revamped Back to School Night began with the school's Families and Educators Together (FET) team. The traditional format often excluded families who felt marginalized as they sat in a classroom corner with an

interpreter. Feedback from FET families revealed a desire for an interactive experience, moving away from the "sit and get" design, which was intimidating and overwhelming. Teachers also preferred a less stressful evening to genuinely connect with the community.

Crest View Elementary's Back to School Night and Fall Festival transitioned seamlessly into an integrated event. The unification enhanced engagement by combining academic information with enjoyable activities for families. The evening featured a structured flow with staggered classroom visits offering brief interactions for caregivers to meet teachers, receive concise curriculum overviews, and understand key procedures. Teachers delivered streamlined 10 minute presentations, repeated as needed, allowing flexibility for families with multiple children. Many translators were in classrooms and school, assisting families as needed. Educators prepared handouts to minimize lecture time. A new element was the teacher created "passport," which encouraged students and parents to explore classrooms and the school, culminating in a free book from the library. Concurrently, the Fall Festival unfolded across the school grounds. Festivities included school-sponsored concessions, games, face painting, crafts, community booths, and a student showcase. School Information Hubs were staffed by PTO members and staff, providing space for informal interactions.

There were a few logistical and planning challenges in implementing the new structure as various school/parent groups had different visions for the night. However, the integration of Back to School Night with the Fall Festival represented a progressive evolution in Crest View Elementary's family engagement. By combining academic introductions with a community celebration, the school created a more welcoming, informative, and enjoyable experience. Parent, student, and staff feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with the interactive "passport" being a particular highlight.

The key to success in the Back to School Night's overhaul was listening to the voices of marginalized families. The new design strengthened the community, enhanced home-school partnerships, and established a positive, inclusive tone, particularly fostering greater engagement with Latinx families. As one parent said, "We wanted to help, to participate, and be part of our school, and through FET, tonight we got to!"

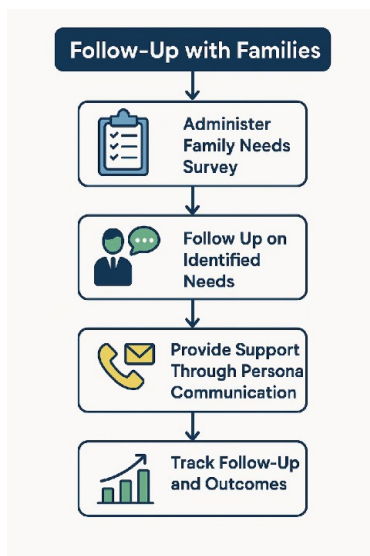
The Power of Follow-Up

Independence Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Lucia Wirths, lwirths@cherrycreekschools.org

At Independence Elementary School in the Cherry Creek School District, staff believe that understanding the unique challenges families face is key to supporting student success. The Family Needs Survey, started five years ago, has become an essential tool for guiding outreach and understanding the community's changing needs. The goal of this practice was to harness the power of follow-up to deepen engagement with families who shared their needs through the Family Needs Survey. Without intentional follow-up, staff risk missing important opportunities to assist families in areas like mental health, food security, and academic support. This practice ensured that no family was overlooked and allowed staff to respond in timely, meaningful ways.

The planning and implementation of this work involved close collaboration between the Principal, Community Liaison, mental health team, and key staff members. Teachers also shared important insights based on their daily interactions with students and families. Staff carefully reviewed every survey response, and directly contacted families who shared specific needs to make sure their concerns were addressed.



This follow-up was centered around personal communication. Staff connected with families through phone calls, meetings, text messages, and emails to better understand their situations and offer the most helpful support. That meant connecting them with local resources, offering school-based support, or helping with emotional or academic needs. When families feel supported, students are better able to focus and succeed in school. These connections also helped create a more welcoming and trusting school environment.

To measure how well this practice was working, staff kept track of follow-up efforts and how often they resulted in meaningful help for families. One challenge was managing the large amount of information received, while still responding in a thoughtful and personal way. Technology helped them stay organized and timely with responses. Another challenge was making sure they had the resources to meet the wide variety of needs families shared. This was possible thanks to the strong relationships the school has built with community organizations, sponsors, and donors.

For those looking to replicate this practice, focus on building strong relationships with families. Trust is key, and the more personal and empathetic the follow-up, the better the outcomes will be. It's not just about collecting information through surveys; it's about what is done afterward. Many families appreciated the effort, sharing, "Your constant support makes us feel like we're not alone," and "Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the food you give us each week; it really makes life a little easier." These heartfelt reflections are a reminder that the real impact comes from walking alongside our families every step of the way.

To Be Seen, To Be Heard, To Be Supported

Horizon Community Middle School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Jhohana Avila, javilaromero@cherrycreekschools.org

At Horizon Community Middle School, a place as diverse as the 700 students who walk its halls, caring for one another and building deeper connections isn't just encouraged—it's essential. Every staff member plays a unique role. Together, staff create an environment where the strength of each individual is recognized, and trust is built through collaboration.

The goal of this practice is to support families and students in a way that helps everyone feel seen, feel heard, and feel supported. Putting this into practice isn't simple. It starts with awareness—recognizing the needs of individuals and opening consistent channels of communication. Each staff member plays a critical part in ensuring everyone stays present, intentional, and proactive. Take, for example, the student who came to school last winter without a jacket in the middle of a snowstorm. The security team noticed and acted, coordinating with the Community Liaison to provide him with winter clothing. This may seem small, but in reality, it's transformative by providing safety, dignity, and care. Or consider the families who face housing challenges, food insecurity, or barriers to transportation. School staff must be able to see these needs, listen carefully, and help connect families to resources. Meeting basic needs is transformational for families.

Building a community where staff, students, and families feel empowered to show up and help one another is the foundation. The bridge between families and the school is not optional—it is crucial. Horizon Middle School is actively creating the space for trust—through awareness, sharing, and collaboration. With activities

like McKinney Vento events, they not only provide needed support, but also foster a sense of unity. Whether it's through food distribution at Husky Market, help from churches, or referrals to community services, they ensure families have a place to turn.



Staff also build connections through experiences—Voices of Color, multicultural nights, and parent observation days—where families are invited into the school environment. These opportunities allow them to witness, firsthand, the daily routines, classrooms, and culture that shape their children's lives. For many, this is the first step in building lasting trust and partnership. As one family said after participating, "This made a difference in our family."



Warm Welcome

Lewis-Palmer Early Childhood Program, Lewis-Palmer School District

Submitted by Melissa Gibson-Steiner, mgibson-steiner@lewispalmer.org

Lewis-Palmer School District's Early Childhood Program supports the transition of children ages three and four from home to school. It fosters relationships with the families by hosting a "Warm Welcome" at the beginning of the school year. At back-to-school events, many families frequently meet the teacher and explore the classroom simultaneously, which can be chaotic, especially for young children. The Warm Welcome came from recognizing the need to build better relationships with children and families before school started.



When teachers returned in early August, they invited families to sign up for a specific time to come to school for the Warm Welcome. During these 15-20 minute visits, the child explored the classroom, got to know the teacher and the assistants, and saw the partnership between their family and the school. They learned school is a safe and fun environment. The family received pertinent school information, submitted required paperwork, and asked questions. Teachers inquired about the child's interests, strengths, and potential needs. Teachers had talking points to help encourage parents to share. They asked what their child's special interests are, what goals the family had for their child, and if the child used a different name other than their given name. Teachers shared tips for talking to the child about school before the first day. Parents were encouraged to take a picture of their child and the teacher doing an activity planned for the day. Teachers also provided suggestions for drop-off if the parent anticipated challenges.

After 4-5 family visits, the early childhood staff [debriefed their observations](#) of the children who visited. They identified two strengths and asked if there was a reported or observed need. If a need existed, they discussed possible strategies to support the transition. Staff reported that taking the time to share observations benefited children on the first day of school because they had supports in place. After the staff met all the children, they expanded their debrief conversations to align strategies between the adults within the classroom. These included slight changes to classroom routines and providing accommodations for children.

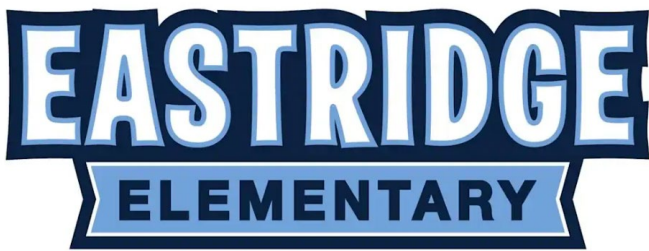
By adjusting the beginning-of-year schedule, teachers can better prepare and assist families in transitioning to the preschool classroom, leading to an exceptional year of learning and growth. They described the benefits of the Warm Welcome as an opportunity to get to know the students' and families' stories, observe the child, ask follow-up questions, and plan for children who may struggle with the transition to school. Families expressed gratitude for this unique opportunity.



Welcoming Tours

Eastridge Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Jeri Ramos, jramos13@cherrycreekschools.org



At Eastridge Elementary School in Cherry Creek School District, Welcoming Tours play a vital role in building strong connections between families and schools. These tours are more than just a walk through the hallways: they are an immersive experience designed to showcase the school's culture, values, and educational environment. By welcoming new families to tour the school, Eastridge is creating an inviting atmosphere that fosters trust and collaboration.

Due to the rising numbers of students who joined the school throughout the year, the Assistant Principal, Registrar, and Community Liaison collaborated on a way to welcome new families to the school before their students' first day. The school designated two days a week for families to come in and meet staff; finish paperwork; learn about school times, expectations, and bus schedules; tour the building; and receive backpacks and school supplies if needed. Students typically started school the day after the tour.

The Welcoming Tours served as a platform for the school to welcome new families to the community that created an inviting atmosphere and built trusting relationships. The biggest challenge was getting a hold of families to schedule the Welcoming Tours and arranging a time that works for them.

For those looking to replicate this practice, work closely with school staff to ensure there is enough time to answer questions and support the new families during this transition.

Winter Family Night

Moffat PK-12 School, Moffat Consolidated School District #2

Submitted by Toni Kayser, tkayserboyd@moffatschools.org

Moffat Consolidated #2 partnered with the Center for Rural School Health and Education (CRSHE) to provide support and resources to the local rural community. As the 2024 holiday season approached, the Moffat CRSHE team had the idea to provide free holiday photo sessions for families. As the team brainstormed, other ideas emerged such as making gingerbread houses and having hot cocoa and popcorn for families. The Pre-K and elementary school team included the students' annual Christmas caroling to encourage more families to attend.

After the activities were planned and funds approved, the CRSHE Team divided and conquered all the required tasks. The Health and Wellness Teacher found the photographer, who was willing to give the school a discount, and coordinated having the photos printed. The School Secretary made a homemade hot cocoa



recipe, and the SEL & Family Liaison made a flier to send to families. The Kindergarten Teacher and K-5 Reading Interventionist posted the flier on Moffat's social media multiple times. They also gathered the supplies needed to build the gingerbread houses. The Pre-K and Elementary school team practiced Christmas carols every day during school hours for two weeks before the event.

Approximately 100 families and students attended, which is a terrific turnout considering there are less than 110 students enrolled in Moffat PreK-12. The Pre-K and Elementary students sang Christmas carols at the

beginning of the event. CRSHE team members monitored candy and helped families with supplies for gingerbread house making. Other team members made and served free hot cocoa and popcorn to all families, while still more team members helped build the picture area and helped the photographer take family photos. Photos were delivered to families on a parent teacher conference night in February.

Winter Family Night was not specifically evaluated. The families commented on how lovely the evening was and the students loved it. Next year, the CRSHE team is considering sending out a survey after the event.

Having organized leaders and a great team willing to share tasks so no one person was overwhelmed was critical. One consideration is to have a few more people at the gingerbread houses to minimize stress around candy distribution.



Better Communication Through AI

New America School Aurora, Charter School Institute

Submitted by Robert Newman, rnewman@newamericaschool.org

New America School Aurora celebrated its 20th year this year. The Aurora campus primarily serves immigrants, refugees, and under-served populations in grades 9-12. There are over 10 languages represented in the student body of approximately 70 students. Many students are over-age and under-credited with limited academic English language skills.

Many electronic translation services are only applicable to online or email communication, which many New America families do not access due to a variety of factors including resource limitations. To increase communication accessibility and reduce burden on school staff, New America has utilized AI (ChatGPT and Google Translate) to create on-demand translation of hard copy communication and resources.



The Principal at New America Aurora has experimented with several AI tools to increase efficacy and decrease workload. Due to the small size of the school, all staff at New America fill multiple roles. The transient nature of the student population means that the languages represented in the student body change over the course of the year. After experimenting with different AI tools, the Principal realized that the most effective way to connect with families and students is hard-copy communication. Additionally, by translating all materials into all represented languages, students can choose which language is most accessible to their family.

The Principal translated all family communication in real-time and printed on a daily basis. The school used hanging file folders to organize communication by language, and students selected which language was most relevant to their family on their way out of the door each day. Teachers also had copies of the communication to send home with students to ensure everyone has access to the right information at the right time. Additionally, families received a text message in their selected language notifying them that important information was coming home with their student. In addition to hard copies of communication, students could scan a QR code which would generate the same information in their language of choice. Since implementing this practice, family attendance at conferences and events has increased notably.

AI products are both cost effective and time-saving. Using AI to streamline and increase efficacy of communication is a great way to dip your toe into the waters of AI.

Bilingual Audio Version of School Newsletter

Whittier International Elementary School, Boulder Valley School District

Submitted by Caitlin Kline, caitlin.kline@bvsd.org

The addition of a bilingual audio version of the school newsletter at Whittier International Elementary has been instrumental in communicating effectively with families. By providing multiple modalities for families to access school announcements, Whittier has tried to ensure that all parents have equal access to important information about their child's education.



The process for improving the school newsletter was initiated by the Families and Educators Together (FET) team leader. Recognizing the challenges that Spanish-speaking parents face in fully accessing written school communication, the committee garnered feedback from stakeholders and advocated for the necessary resources to improve the written format of the school newsletter and include a bilingual audio version for families to listen to instead of read. In order to improve the readability of the school newsletter, families provided valuable suggestions about the order of announcements with the most urgent and important announcements and anything requiring family action steps included first, a calendar of upcoming events, ensuring concise paragraphs, and consistently using titles & bulleted lists that transferred to viewing on mobile devices.

Although the written newsletter was already being provided in multiple languages, families cited literacy barriers to their access to information. As a result, Whittier staff created an audio version in English and Spanish each week. This was accomplished by a bilingual staff member spending five minutes reading the school newsletter aloud in a Google Meet recording and including the link to these recordings at the top of the newsletter.

Families reported that they found the audio version of the newsletter much more user-friendly, some accessing school announcements for the first time! They appreciated the short length of the audio recording (just 2-3 minutes) and also the personal connection with the bilingual staff member who created it. Challenges to implementation included time for school staff to create the recording in advance of the school newsletter being sent out and also ensuring that all families were aware of the new audio format. Next year the committee plans to examine the timing of communication and other feedback from families.

Involving families in the process of giving feedback and making suggestions for improved home-school communication was powerful for family engagement and also provided important insights to school staff regarding barriers and needs. By listening to stakeholders, school staff was able to implement small, but powerful changes to the school newsletter that resulted in more equitable access to school information.

Family Liaisons Build Trusting Relationships

Preston Middle School, Poudre School District

Submitted by Yesenia Silverio Ocampo, ysilverioocampo@psdschools.org



At Preston Middle School in Poudre School District, building trusting relationships is a top priority. Staff have created a welcoming and inclusive environment where every student and family—regardless of ethnicity or background—is respected and supported by hiring a Family Liaison.

The Family Liaison served as a bridge between the school and families, especially those who speak a language other than English or who were unfamiliar with the educational system. By ensuring that all communication was translated accurately and delivered in a timely manner, the Family Liaison helped break down language and cultural barriers. Moreover, the Family Liaison helped promote culturally responsive practices and encouraged parent participation in school activities, decision-making processes, and student support initiatives.

Poudre School District’s Language, Culture, and Equity Department played a critical role in ensuring that all families can communicate directly with school staff. By providing Preston with an Integrated Language Assistant (ILA) device for reliable translation, and with the dedicated support of the Family Liaison, language was never a barrier to connection. When the Family Liaison was unavailable, the school used the ILA to ensure effective communication in any language. The Principal held the front office to a high standard, requiring staff to be fully trained on the device and to coordinate closely with the Family Liaison. Spanish-speaking families, in particular, could count on consistent, clear communication and full engagement at every step. At Preston Middle School, staff training on these tools is a requirement.

When families understand school policies, events, and academic expectations, they are more likely to engage meaningfully in their child's education. Similarly, when teachers and administrators understand the needs and perspectives of families, they can provide more responsive and equitable support. At Preston Middle School, families were empowered to communicate with teachers, staff, and administrators using tools like emails, voice messages, and written notes in their native language. The Family Liaison ensured all messages were translated, keeping communication clear and accessible.

Partnering for Student Success: Showcasing Our Instructional Model

The Falcon Zone, School District 49

Submitted by Cari Muresan, carolyn.muresan@d49.org

The Falcon Zone, made up of six schools in D49, is committed to Enhanced Opportunities, Engaging Environments, and Elevated Instruction. Through a weekly newsletter, The Falcon Zone Flyer, families can peek into classrooms, gaining insight into student learning and innovation. By showcasing the instructional model in action, the Falcon Zone highlights the incredible work happening across schools and fosters community partnership in education.

This initiative was a collaborative effort led by the Falcon Zone Community Liaison and supported by the zone's school principals and instructional coaches. Instructional coaches and principals provided key insights into classroom instruction, while the Zone Community Liaison visited classrooms, captured learning in action, and crafted the weekly newsletter.

🐼🐼 Empowered Teachers - Sponsored by Texas Roadhouse 🐼🐼

Mrs. Esquivel organized an exciting and interactive Science Day for her students, creating a dynamic learning environment filled with hands-on experiments and engaging activities. Throughout the day, students eagerly explored scientific concepts through a variety of experiments, sparking curiosity and enthusiasm for discovery. Laughter and excitement filled the classroom as they collaborated with their classmates, testing hypotheses, making observations, and experiencing the thrill of scientific exploration firsthand. It was a day of learning, creativity, and teamwork, leaving students with a deeper appreciation for science!



By providing families with a consistent, transparent view of what's happening in the classroom, the newsletter helped encourage parents to have meaningful conversations with their children about their learning. For teachers, the newsletter provided a platform to share best practices, fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous growth. Ultimately, by making learning visible, accessible, and celebrated, the newsletter served as a powerful tool for building community trust, reinforcing instructional priorities, and driving sustained school improvement.

While the impact of the newsletter has not been evaluated, the reach of the newsletter was determined

through open rates, click-through rates, and survey responses from parents and staff. Additionally, tracking community involvement at events helped determine if the newsletter influenced positive outcomes. Teacher and student testimonials, along with staff input, further gauged its influence on school morale and instructional focus. Continuous data collection and adjustments will ensure the newsletter evolves to meet its goals of enhancing learning and fostering a positive school climate.

When creating a newsletter, focus on clarity and consistency. Tailor content to the audience, using visuals and simple language to highlight key accomplishments. Engage families with interactive elements like surveys and feedback. Showcase the impact of the instructional model through specific examples. Falcon Zone Superintendent Brain Smith shared, "Our newsletters have helped the community understand our Falcon Zone Instructional Model centered around personalized learning in a much more meaningful way. Parents and the community are able to see pictures, videos, and testimonials from staff and students about the power and practice of EmpowerFZ."

Positive Phone Calls

Alamosa School District

Submitted by Genesis Escalon, gescalon@alamosaschools.org

Alamosa School District was excited to announce the 2024-2025 continuation and expansion of the “Positive Phone Calls Home” program across schools. This initiative has received positive feedback from parents, demonstrating its effectiveness as a valuable communication tool.

Alamosa engaged various individuals in the positive phone calls, including teachers, members of the family engagement team, assistant principals, and principals. These calls took place across five school locations, fostering strong connections and enhancing communication with families in the district.



Throughout this year, Alamosa’s efforts have led to a significant number of calls made to celebrate student achievements. Specifically, in the K-2 category, there were 513 calls, showcasing Alamosa’s commitment to recognizing early educational milestones. The 3-5 grade level saw 147 calls, while the middle school contributed 203 calls to the total. At the high school level, AHS made 211 calls, demonstrating an ongoing dedication to supporting adolescents in their successes. Additionally, Alamosa’s two alternative high schools contributed 231 calls, further contributing to creating a supportive educational environment.

Overall, Alamosa reached an impressive total of 1,432 positive calls in the 2024-2025 school year. Every month, each school generated a report within the PowerSchool system, requiring teachers to enter their positive phone calls directly into the platform. This data was subsequently tracked on a comprehensive spreadsheet to monitor the number of positive interactions at each school. By maintaining this record, Alamosa aimed to highlight and encourage positive communication between teachers and families, fostering a supportive atmosphere and enhancing student engagement. This initiative not only recognized teachers' efforts but also emphasized the importance of nurturing strong relationships within the school community. The data collected proved vital for ongoing evaluations and improvements.

The main recommendation is that there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Alamosa staff observed a neighboring district’s positive phone calls initiative and found it inspiring. Many schools and districts are willing to share their successful strategies and support one another.

Postcard Art Contest

Weld Re-5J School District

Submitted by Alexandra Ham, alexandra.ham@weldre5j.org

In the 2024-2025 school year, Weld RE-5J offered an art contest to PK-12 students on the topic of #BetterTogether. The main goal was to increase positive home-school contact. A winner was chosen from each school and postcards were created for all teachers and staff to send to families.

The district Family, School, and Community Partnership (FSCP) leaders came up with the idea and facilitated the implementation. Principals and administrative teams facilitated postcard campaigns at each building. Elementary PTOs and FSCP leaders acted as judges for the contest. The superintendent, assistant superintendent, and Board of Education (BoE) honored the students with the winning artwork at a BoE meeting.

The intention was for postcards to go to every household, not just select students. Another goal was to recognize artists, as athletes are often valued and large clubs find recognition as well, but artists can feel left out of the limelight. Students were encouraged to share any art form that could be printed on an oversized postcard. A local company printed 500 postcards of each winning design. Each school received an equal amount of each design. Schools were encouraged to keep track of the postcards so that every student was contacted, rather than one student receiving multiple postcards.

Feedback from the schools was that they preferred their own student's winning artwork, so school leaders traded postcards. Families loved the positive notes sent home, appreciated the art contest, and are excited to have their students' artwork considered again next year.

Challenges included timing, advertising, and implementation across buildings. Elementary schools had a great response to the art contest. Secondary schools had almost no submissions. It took longer than anticipated to edit and print the postcards, get on a BoE agenda, and notify contest winners. The practice was evaluated in a qualitative way, where each FSCP leader shared their experiences and brainstormed ways to improve the practice for next year. The group believes that there will be more buy-in from students after receiving postcards in the mail, and more buy-in from teachers after hearing positive feedback about the notes on their postcards.

Recommendations for implementation are to have a timeline determined before starting; use a quality scanner for the artwork; line up your judges and get on the BoE agenda early; offer prizes to entice art contest entries; give art teachers a heads up; and have a collection plan for entries.



Relationship Building Calls

Montrose County School District

Submitted by Allie Freismuth, allie.freismuth@mcsd.org



Montrose School District is partnering with the Rocky Mountain Family Engagement Collective (RMFEC) for a two-year cohort experience with the hopes to strengthen family engagement across the district. Montrose District trained 200 teachers over six sessions to build the capacity of the teaching staff. To set the tone for the new year, participating school principals set expectations for staff to conduct Relationship Building Calls.

School leaders worked with RMFEC to determine the capacity of their staff and how they would set expectations for relationship-based conversations. School leaders set schoolwide goals, planned collective learning sessions, and designed tracking systems for their building. This created alignment to leadership goals and embedded the work into annual staff learning plans.

Montrose educators completed the first professional learning session named “Building Trusting Relationships with Families,” which provided the framework for calls home. Using an [RMFEC resource](#) to help guide conversations, teachers connected with families in a new way. Instead of leaning on traditional connections focused on academic performance, grade level expectations, or their unique expertise as an educator, teachers took a new approach of centering the relationship and expressing a desire for partnership with the family. The ultimate goal was for the teacher to demonstrate their ability and willingness to listen to the family and learn what each family views as an asset in the coming year of learning.

Each school set goals for teachers and created a shared spreadsheet to track the calls and learning for each teacher. This allowed for principals to focus on specific areas they would like to improve. Principals then took the data to create check-ins and feedback loops from the learning to center the positive relationship from the beginning. Principals who led staff reflections noted, “staff has said calls were eye opening” and once teachers made a few calls, they continually wanted to do more. At Pomona Elementary School, 60% of teachers exceeded their goal of calls, indicating a shown value in the practice.

By having the calls embedded into the entire system, from district-school-teacher-family, the practice was adhered to and completed, rather than allowing champions to define and implement ad hoc. By setting clear goals, tracking, and effective ways to reflect on the learning, teachers really took to the practice and made it their own. Additionally, setting goals based on capacity and aligning to overall school goals made it feel obtainable and not ‘one more thing for teachers to do.’

Spanish Conversations with the Principal

Meadow Point Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Emily Prascher, eprascher3@cherrycreekschools.org



At Meadow Point Elementary School in Cherry Creek School District, staff observed that Spanish-speaking families were underrepresented at family group meetings such as Parent-Teacher-Community Organization (PTCO), Voices of Color, and School Accountability Committee (SAC) meetings. To

address this, the school hosted an event where Spanish was the primary language spoken, with English translation available. Attendees provided feedback about how to adapt existing meetings to increase their participation. The goal of this practice was to increase engagement with Spanish-speaking families and ensure their voices are recognized as a significant part of the school community.

The school's Community Liaison and Principal planned the event, with an emphasis on cultural responsiveness in the invitation wording, food selection, and outreach approach. Word-of-mouth invitations were prioritized as the most effective method for engaging families and a small group of parents were asked to help promote the event within their networks, supplemented by a printed [flyer](#) sent home with all students that included specific event details and targeted electronic communications to Spanish-speaking families. Additionally, staff included an electronic invitation in the school's e-newsletter and families received a Talking Points the day prior to the event.

The school hosted a one-hour casual conversation with the Principal, centered on family introductions, shared experiences from the school year, and hopes or needs moving forward. The event, titled Spanish Conversations with the Principal, featured a traditional Spanish hot chocolate beverage appropriate for the season, called "Chocolate Abuelita Y Pan Dulce" or "Hot Chocolate and Sweet Bread". The school staff provided childcare, which contributed to increased participation.

Although attendance expectations were uncertain, attendance exceeded that of other parent group meetings. Families expressed appreciation for the effort made to create a welcoming environment and reiterated their dedication to supporting their children's education. They also suggested incorporating more culturally relevant elements into school events and celebrations.

For schools seeking to replicate this practice, staff recommend collaborating with individuals who share a cultural background with the community. This approach greatly enhances the cultural relevance and effectiveness of the event. Establishing safety, trust, and genuine relationships with historically marginalized families requires time and consistent effort. As one staff member reflected, "This group of parents will contribute amazing ideas to our community, and it is essential to keep creating safe spaces for these conversations to demonstrate genuine interest and commitment."

Transforming Attendance Through Family, School, and Community Partnerships

Castle View High School, Douglas County School District

Submitted by Janette Szabo, jszabo@dcsdk12.org



Castle View High School (CVHS), located in the Douglas County School District, implemented a targeted initiative for the 2024-25 school year to reduce chronic absenteeism, aiming to decrease the rate from 33% to 26%. With a focus on improving student engagement, academic achievement, and school climate, the school launched a multi-tiered approach to attendance that integrated data analysis, family engagement, and community resources.

The planning and implementation involved CVHS leadership, deans, counselors, teachers, attendance staff, and family engagement teams. External partners such as the Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC) and the district's communications team also played critical roles. The school contributed insights through newsletters and communication platforms, helping shape effective strategies.

CVHS implemented a series of interventions to improve attendance and student success. These included weekly attendance reviews by staff, targeted interventions for at-risk students, and school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) such as the “Show Up, Show Out, Show Down” program, which publicly celebrates strong attendance. Communication tools like the Smore platform and an “Attendance Corner” in newsletters helped clarify absence policies and reached over 5,000 families in multiple languages. The Rock Program, a Tier 2 support for underclassmen, offered structured study halls, mentorship, and daily check-ins—helping 110 out of 120 students progress without further intervention. Educators were empowered with email templates, tracking tools, and a revised protocol requiring family outreach before escalating attendance issues. These efforts resulted in a drop in chronic absenteeism to 20%, reduced tardies and detentions, and a 50% decrease in suspensions. The culture of accountability, combined with personal phone calls and proactive and positive recognition, improved student outcomes and overall school climate.

Staff evaluated the initiative through attendance data, behavioral trends, and feedback from families and staff. While the school exceeded its attendance goals, challenges included extended absences during holidays, mental health issues, and legal limits on enforcing attendance for older students. CVHS addressed these through increased mental health support and adaptive, student-centered interventions.

To replicate this practice, build strong internal systems for a multi-tiered approach using data review, engage families with clear, inclusive communication, and foster a school culture that celebrates attendance. The greatest success comes when families see and hear how schools are building relationships and offering support.



Arts Integration Night

The da Vinci Academy, Academy School District 20

Submitted by Angela Hoss, angela.hoss@asd20.org

The da Vinci Academy, an arts-integrated school within Academy School District 20, hosts a unique family engagement initiative known as Arts Integration Night. The goal of this event was to demonstrate how academic standards are meaningfully integrated with the arts. Families were invited to engage in hands-on lessons that reflected classroom instruction, enabling them to experience the intersection of visual and performing arts with core academic content. For example, during one event, second-grade students created “story gloves” as a tool for retelling narratives—a lesson that combines literacy standards with visual arts.



Planning and implementation of Arts Integration Night was a collaborative effort led by a committee of one teacher from each grade level and a representative from the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) team. The school’s drama teacher chaired the committee to provide guidance on incorporating performance arts into the event. Each committee member contributed by selecting a project and identifying the academic and art standards it aligned with.

The event was structured in an open-house format, allowing families to move through various classrooms and explore the creative work happening across grade levels. Each classroom

featured an interactive lesson, co-presented by the teaching team, that exemplified how arts standards are embedded within academic instruction. This format encouraged cross-grade-level exploration, giving younger students a glimpse into future grade-level expectations. Families were enthusiastic and deeply engaged, often expressing surprise and admiration at the depth of their children’s understanding. The event had a noticeable impact on school climate by fostering pride, connection, and mutual appreciation between families and staff. It also strengthened teacher-family relationships through direct and meaningful conversations about student learning.

Evaluation of Arts Integration Night included collecting feedback from families and staff through informal surveys, as well as tracking attendance. With over 250 attendees, the event demonstrated strong community participation. The committee reviewed feedback and made refinements for future events. One challenge was ensuring that all materials and classroom spaces were prepared in advance, which required careful logistical planning.

For schools considering a similar event, advanced preparation and collaboration are key. Providing time for lesson development and material organization ensures a smooth experience for both staff and families. As one staff member noted, “It’s rewarding to watch families discover how their children learn—and to see students proudly teaching their parents.”



Engaging Families in Math Learning

Fox Creek Elementary School, Douglas County School District

Submitted by Janette Szabo, jszabo@dcsdk12.org

Fox Creek Elementary School launched a family math engagement initiative early in the 2024-25 school year aimed at reducing math anxiety and strengthening home-school connections. Located in Douglas County School District, the school recognized through parent feedback that families wanted to better understand modern math instruction and support their children's learning.

The practice was collaboratively developed and implemented by Fox Creek's school leadership, classroom teachers, and support staff. Additional support came from district departments, including the Gifted and Talented (GT) and Multilingual Learner (ML) programs. Input from families during events such as "Get to Know You" conferences and "Charcuterie with Cheryl" (the school's Principal) shaped the direction of the initiative.



The initiative featured a family-centered math night designed to build parent confidence and increase understanding of math instruction. Teachers were surveyed ahead of time to identify and address their own math-related concerns. Families participated in math activities together using classroom manipulatives and received take-home resources. To reduce barriers, the school provided interpreters, snacks, name tags, and door prizes. The first ten families to register received incentives. Families moved together through activity stations, reinforcing the idea that learning math is a collaborative and enjoyable process. The school emphasized accessibility, making sure multilingual families could engage meaningfully. Teachers learned new ways to maintain family engagement, including sharing instructional videos. As a result, family attendance at school events increased significantly, and parents reported greater comfort in supporting math learning at home.

Staff evaluated the practice through participation rates, multilingual family engagement, and qualitative feedback from both staff and parents. Fifty percent of ML families attended, and overall family participation in school events rose to 85%. Challenges included addressing staff apprehension around math instruction and ensuring materials were accessible to all families. By proactively surveying teachers and translating materials, the school effectively addressed these concerns.

For schools seeking to replicate this practice, start by listening to families and staff to shape a meaningful, inclusive experience. Collaboration with various staff members and families to leverage expertise also promotes success. Providing a welcoming atmosphere, engaging activities, and clear communication made all the difference in building lasting partnerships.

Family Science Night

Hackberry Hill Elementary School, Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Sarah Robirds, 177541e@jeffcoschools.us

With a changing school demographic due to school closures in the area over the past several years, adding more school-wide events at Hackberry Hill Elementary School in Jeffco allows families the opportunity to build stronger family-school relationships. Family Science Night is tied to one of the school's UIP goals—to *increase the positive culture of belonging*. The goal of the event was to foster scientific curiosity and exploration by engaging elementary students and their families in hands-on STEM activities while collaborating with community partners.



PTA volunteers, the Family Engagement Liaison, and the Digital Teacher-Librarian (DTL) collaboratively planned the event to transform what was formerly the Science Fair into a more inclusive and family-friendly event. A parent volunteer secured diverse community partners to lead hands-on experiments and demonstrations. The DTL and Family Engagement Liaison also organized a group of students to showcase engaging activities in the school's STEAM lab.

Family Science Night was an evening of discovery and fun for all elementary students and their families. Hosting the event on a weeknight ensured greater participation, as did free dinner, courtesy of the school's PTA.

Several community partners helped make the event a success. The Jefferson County Public Library brought programmable robots, Creighton University students offered take-home slime experiments, a North Arvada Middle School teacher led paper rocket projects, and Hackberry Hill alumni facilitated seed planting. The required fifth-grade science projects, alongside optional projects from K-4th grade students, were proudly showcased and rigorously judged by college students from Metro State University, adding an exciting layer of academic engagement. The collaborative environment ignited scientific curiosity and demonstrated real-world applications of STEM, inspiring continued learning and reinforcing that education is a shared community effort.

Anecdotal feedback from staff, families, and students indicate that Family Science Night was a huge success. Next year, school staff plan to have more precise data to inform areas of improvement and compare outcomes in subsequent years. Family Science Night is an easy event to replicate and reminds families of the many community partners in their area that can offer valuable learning experiences outside of the school building.

Family STEM Events

South Lakewood Elementary School, Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Kristi Seward and Andrea Gilmore, andrea.gilmore@jeffco.k12.co.us

Throughout the 2024-2025 school year, the Digital Teacher-Librarian (DTL) and Family Engagement Liaison (FEL) at South Lakewood Elementary School in Jeffco Public Schools collaborated to host a monthly Family STEM challenge for a different grade level each month. Topics were chosen to supplement, reinforce, and enrich what students learned in class during science and ELA, specifically in their Into Reading units.

The goal of the monthly STEM challenge was to allow families an opportunity to create community, as well as give them space, time, and materials to work through the engineering design process as a family. Families received information to begin planning at home. Participating students received books related to the STEM challenge so they could delve deeper into the assigned topic and connect science/engineering to the real world. The PTA and Title I helped provide funding for these materials.



Each month, a diverse representation of families of all age groups, genders, and cultures participated in the STEM challenge. All South Lakewood families were invited to these no-cost events, which were advertised through weekly newsletters from classroom teachers and the principal, as well as Talking Points sent directly to grade-level families, and flyers with QR codes in students' Friday folders. Google Forms were used to sign up for the event and provide feedback, which families were asked to give after attending a STEM challenge. These events provided students with time to collaborate, think critically, and be creative. Best of all, students left with a newfound sense of wonder about the world around them and were excited to share their experience with their classmates.

After the event, one parent shared: "Thank you for giving me some time with my family to create, without my having to stress over supplies and prep. This was an unforeseen gift when I registered, but it was such a big one! Thanks for all that you do."

Multilingual Night, "Lectura en Mi Familia"

Alamosa School District

Submitted by Genesis Escalon, gescalon@alamosaschools.org

For over 24 years, Lectura en Mi Familia has been an integral program within the Alamosa School District, serving K-2 and 3-5 grade students. In the 2024-2025 school year, district staff launched the first District Lectura en Mi Familia Multilingual Night. This event was a tremendous success, attracting over 663 participants, including 22 agencies and 14 dedicated students who assisted and joined in the activities.

The planning of Multilingual Night, known as "Lectura Mi Familia," involved the Family Engagement team, five English Language Learner (ELL) coordinators from each building, and principals. The initiative was guided by the Assistant Superintendent and coordinated by the Family Engagement Coordinator and 3-5 ELL Coordinator.

Lectura Mi Familia centered around the theme of Career Development. The evening began with welcoming remarks from the Alamosa Mayor, followed by the Superintendent. The event recognized students for their achievements and improvements, with coordinators presenting certificates to those who showed the most progress. Each school's principal awarded an outstanding plaque to a top student, and there was a special recognition for an outstanding district student.

Following the awards ceremony, attendees participated in various workshops led by students from Adams State University, as well as former multilingual students from the Alamosa School District, who are now thriving in various career fields. The event was supported by 23 different agencies, along with CHAF and Migrant Education. Local restaurant Lindo Jalisco generously provided delicious food, while a performance by the group Semillas de la Tierra added a cultural touch to the celebration. Overall, Lectura Mi Familia was a wonderful opportunity to promote career development and celebrate student achievements within the community.

This practice was evaluated by having families complete surveys on their takeaways from that night. One significant challenge was the registration process, which proved to be overwhelming. Many families reported difficulties, which impacted their overall experience. To address this, the registration system will be revamped for next year to make it more user-friendly.

The best advice for those wanting to replicate this work is to build on existing successful practices rather than starting from scratch. Collaborate closely with coordinators, principals, and teachers, as their insights are invaluable. Additionally, leverage community resources that support students to ensure a comprehensive approach to engagement.



Ninth Grade Success Stories

Thorton High School, Adams 12 Five Star Schools

Submitted by A'ndra Warren, andra.n.warren@adams12.org

The Ninth Grade Success Grant initiative at Thornton High School included a comprehensive Freshman Foundations program spanning 14 classes. The program aimed to improve ninth-grade outcomes by building consistent support systems, promoting student voice and leadership, and strengthening family-school partnerships.

The success of this practice relied on cross-functional collaboration among deans, principals, assistant principals, family outreach liaisons, counselors, teachers, and other school staff. Much of the foundational work involved strategic communication and thoughtful coordination.

The curriculum covered a variety of foundational topics such as professional communication, financial literacy (in partnership with Canvas Credit Union), social-emotional learning (SEL) skills, and relevant topics like vaping. By addressing these needs early, the program aimed to create a more engaged, successful freshman cohort and reduce behavioral and academic barriers throughout high school. This practice was unique in its intentional inclusion of marginalized students—especially English Language Development (ELD) learners and

those with behavioral challenges—in leadership roles and recognition opportunities. For example, the *Student of the Month* program prioritized growth over achievement. Each student received a framed photo and certificate, and staff celebrated them both in-person and through mailed recognitions. These photos and certificates in families' homes created a tangible reminder of student success and belonging. During a second-semester event, every freshman participated in a celebration of growth, each receiving certificates of achievement.



Kid Talks was a particularly effective component of this initiative. In Semester 1, these involved only staff and focused on collaborative support planning for students who were identified at-risk by grades, behavior, and attendance. In Semester 2, students were brought into the conversation to discuss their strengths, interests, and goals. Staff collected data on grades, attendance, registration, and withdrawals. This created shared ownership of outcomes and promoted collaboration across roles, while reducing silos between data and practice.

Organizers of this initiative have several pieces of advice for those hoping to replicate the practice. Be prepared to advocate for time and space during the school day, especially when it comes to developing students' public speaking and leadership skills. Prioritize students who are often overlooked for leadership opportunities. Don't be afraid to push back when instructional time is questioned; the long-term gains in student confidence, engagement, and belonging are worth the investment.

One School, One Book

The da Vinci Academy, Academy School District 20

Submitted by Stina Dokken, stina.dokken@asd20.org

The goal of the One School, One Book program at The da Vinci Academy (TdVA) in Academy School District 20 was to foster a shared culture of literacy, connection, and joy by engaging all K–5 students, staff, and families in a common reading experience. As an arts-integrated public elementary school in Colorado with a diverse student population, TdVA aimed to promote family engagement and strengthen reading habits across grade levels.

One School, One Book was truly a team effort. The school’s digital Learning Coach/Teacher partnered with classroom teachers and the principal to plan and lead this initiative. The PTO generously funded a copy of the book for every student and staff member. Staff coordinated logistics, communication, and engagement activities.

The 2024-2025 One School, One Book was *The World According to Humphrey* by Betty G. Birney, chosen for its humor, accessibility across K–5, and built-in opportunities for social-emotional learning. Every student at TdVA received a copy of the book, a shared reading schedule, and comprehension questions to discuss as a family at home. The Digital Learning Coach/Teacher Librarian created and shared nightly trivia questions and guest reader videos for each odd-numbered chapter. These videos featured staff members reading aloud. Teachers incorporated book discussions into classroom routines, and the shared storyline became a touchstone for conversations, connections, and creative projects.



Students who typically struggle with reading were able to access the story with family support or video scaffolding. The program supported key student outcomes by increasing motivation to read, strengthening comprehension through discussion, and encouraging family literacy habits. Overall, the program contributed to school improvement by promoting a culture of reading and belonging that extended beyond the classroom walls.

While the program was not formally evaluated, informal feedback from students, families, and staff was overwhelmingly positive. Students consistently referenced the book in conversations, trivia participation remained high throughout the month, and teachers reported strong engagement. In the future, staff plan to gather more structured feedback through short surveys for families and staff. One challenge was balancing staff capacity during a busy season.

Start with a book that is engaging, accessible, and enjoyable for a wide age range, and plan creative ways to sustain enthusiasm. Clear communication and staff buy-in are key. One family shared, “Thank you for organizing this! We have loved reading about Humphrey together and participating. We hope this continues next year!”

Pin Ceremony

Community Leadership Academy, Charter School Institute

Submitted by Jessica Welch, JessicaWelch@csi.state.co.us



Community Leadership Academy (CLA) has developed a unique and innovative family engagement activity that leverages existing school structures—such as uniforms, character education, and weekly academic assessments—to celebrate student success. This initiative is anchored by the Pin Ceremony, held every Wednesday morning right after drop-off.

The program is built on three core components: weekly academic assessments, character education, and uniform traditions. Students wear ties with their uniforms each Wednesday, and pins are awarded to symbolize their achievements. The pins fall into two main categories: Character Pins, nominated by teachers each month, and Academic Pins, earned based on progress monitoring data.

The Principal leads this effort with a sharp focus on data and celebration. Each Monday, she reviews academic progress, prepares certificates, and coordinates with staff to sign them, all before the weekly Pin Ceremony. Parents are encouraged to attend, and many do, filling the gym with energy and excitement as students receive recognition for their hard work.

The pin program is highly structured, with clear academic targets for each grade level. For example, during the May 5th ceremony, reading pins were awarded based on word counts tracked through the Accelerated Program, book reviews, and quizzes. Specific milestones (e.g., 1,000 words in 1st grade, 10,000 in 2nd grade, up to 1 million words by 3rd grade) are celebrated with unique pins. CLA recently introduced a limited-edition pin for a math challenge, sparking even greater enthusiasm among students. According to one school leader, “If it’s worth doing, it’s worth celebrating.” The students not only know the significance of each pin they earn but also take pride in explaining them to teachers and family members.

Community Leadership Academy has maintained a performance school rating for thirteen consecutive years within an underserved community. The Pin Ceremony contributes to this success by instilling pride, motivation, and a sense of achievement in students. Parents and students alike celebrate the weekly milestones, reinforcing a culture of growth and perseverance. Observers note the students’ deep understanding of their achievements, with many eagerly sharing the stories behind their pins and the goals they are currently striving to reach. CLA’s pin program has become a cornerstone of its positive school culture, demonstrating the power of celebration and community involvement in academic success.

Reading Odyssey

Odyssey Elementary School, School District 49

Submitted by Trinity Wedde, trinity.wedde@d49.org

Odyssey Elementary, a Title I school in District 49, launched the Reading Odyssey program to ignite a passion for reading and to strengthen family literacy. This year they partnered with [*One School, One Book*](#) to bring *Life According to Og the Frog* by Betty G. Birney into the school. The program aimed to bridge the home-school connection and build a community of readers where reading is valued, celebrated, and accessible.

The program was spearheaded by Odyssey's dedicated Academic Committee, led by the Librarian and Family Liaison. The team included a teacher from each grade level, staff from each department, and an administrator. A student leadership group of ten 5th graders led most of the Kick-Off Assembly and activities during the culminating Literacy Night event. Teachers also provided support including daily classroom slides, created by the Academic Team, featuring engaging questions and vocabulary; and planned activities related to the book.

To build excitement, morning announcements included clues revealing information about the book. The Kick-Off Assembly featured student leaders perched on a "lily pad" in the center of the gym. Students shared what they loved about reading, went over the clues from the week, and even led a flash mob when the book was revealed. Books were handed out to each student before beginning the first chapter together.

Students took home a packet with a frog bookmark, reading calendar, family reading tips, and activities. Additional packets were sent home throughout the program. The Academic team built a [*comprehensive Google site*](#) with recorded chapters read by community members, including high schoolers, district employees, and staff. This was implemented to ensure all students could access a read-aloud of each chapter. The site included resources to support reading comprehension, including weekly reading-related activities to do at home and an interactive section to Read with Og, Draw with Og, and Sing and Dance with Og. All materials were translated into Spanish, including books, parent packets, the Google site, and recorded chapters.



The Reading Odyssey concluded with the Family Literacy Night. Activities included a 5 senses exploration, frog life cycles, a low sensory space, Sphero races, a poetry slam, virtual habitat exploration on zSpace computers, mossarium (a moss terrarium) building, and a trivia challenge. The organization and staffing required for Family Literacy Night was considerable. However, the way activities were structured fostered meaningful connections and interactions between families and staff.

The program's success was evaluated through student participation, teacher feedback, and parent surveys collected via iPads at the Family Literacy Night. Challenges included ensuring equitable access to technology for all families and coordinating the diverse activities for the culminating event. The program's effectiveness was demonstrated by overwhelmingly positive feedback and not only increased family engagement, but also led to new patterns in student library checkouts. Student interest dramatically increased in reading non-fiction about amphibians as well as seeking out chapter books and picture books related to characters in *Og the Frog*.

Recommendations are to start with a passionate team and prioritize accessibility. The key is to make it engaging and inclusive for everyone. Focus on building community and celebrating reading.



Supporting Attendance Through Multi-Tiered Strategies

Stukey Elementary School, Adams 12 Five Star Schools

Submitted by A'ndra Warren, andra.n.warren@adams12.org



**STUKEY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Stukey Elementary School in Adams 12 launched a practice aimed at tackling attendance challenges. The goal was to create a comprehensive attendance support plan, called attendance contracts, incorporating interventions such as home visits, motivational incentives, and data-driven monitoring.

The planning and implementation of this practice involved a collaborative effort among several key teams and individuals. The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Team, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Team, Attendance Team, Social Emotional Learning Specialists (SELs), the school registrar, and the family liaison all played crucial roles. The building administrators provided leadership, and additional staff members were pulled in as needed to address unique student circumstances.

The practice was a multi-step process designed to support students and engage families early. Teachers initiated the process by contacting families after a student accumulated eight absences, then the student was referred to the Attendance Team to develop a personalized attendance plan. Several incentives were introduced to motivate students, such as an extra recess for those maintaining 95% or higher attendance, a visual school-wide attendance board, and weekly announcements where students received trophies. Monthly rotations of a full-sized trophy and semester-based celebrations further reinforced positive behaviors. Additionally, weekly attendance reports were sent to the Assistant Principal for students with five to eight absences or tardies, prompting email notifications to teachers. Staff conducted home visits in cases involving extreme absenteeism or unique family challenges.

Evaluation involved tracking attendance data, with teachers reporting on intervention progress and PBIS meetings serving as checkpoints to review the number of students on attendance contracts. While the practice showed positive impacts on individual student attendance, challenges included outliers where adult decisions in students' lives hindered consistent attendance and persistent chronic absenteeism, highlighting the need for ongoing adaptation.

For schools considering replicating this practice, home visits should be viewed as one component of a broader strategy. As one staff member shared, "Home visits are valuable, but they're not the end-all, be-all. Building relationships through consistent communication is crucial." Support from SELs and interventionists is essential for advocating for students, and involving district case managers early in the process fosters rapport between families and school staff.



Teachers and Parents as Partners

Parkview Elementary School, Rangely School District

Submitted by Kristen Thayne, Kristen.Thayn@rangelyk12.org, and Susan Sheridan, ssheridan2@unl.edu

Teachers and Parents as Partners (TAPP) is a research-based approach that builds relationships between parents and teachers to help students succeed. Implemented most commonly for students who are struggling with social, behavioral or academic challenges, it promotes goal attainment through meaningful home-school partnerships. Parkview Elementary School -- and all of Rangely RE4 -- nurtures students' full potentials by setting high expectations, engaging in collaborative teamwork, and addressing the unique needs of all students. TAPP complements these principles through its emphasis on strengths, partnerships, capacity-building, and individualized experiences.

The School Counselor was instrumental in bringing TAPP to Parkview. She learned of the program through collaborators at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, who also worked with members of CDE's Family, School, Community Partnerships office.

TAPP uses a structured, data-based approach to support students' success. It is designed to augment support systems already in place to support students and families, such as PBIS and MTSS. In particular, it functions effectively as a Tier 2 or Tier 3 approach to support unique and individualized needs of students and families. To use TAPP at Parkview, the counselor first participated in a self-paced, virtual TAPP training program. The program includes a personal coach who helped her hone her delivery of TAPP, introduce it to other teachers and parents at the school, and support its implementation. For each student identified for TAPP, she met with the student's parent(s) and teacher three to four times over approximately six weeks to identify as a team what they can do together to support student success. The first meeting involved identifying the student's strengths, needs and goals. The second meeting involved understanding students' skills and behaviors, and co-creating collaborative home-school plans for helping students' achieve their goals. Parents and teachers implemented the plans over a few weeks, continuing to communicate regularly with one another. They also continued to monitor students' progress using simple tools and procedures. During the final meeting, the counselor -- in collaboration with teachers and parents -- reviewed the home-school data, discussed whether goals were met, helped modify plans to support continued progress, and recommended methods for parents and teachers to continue their partnership.



Teachers at Parkview have reported that students made significant improvements in developing new skills to replace behaviors that interfered with their success at home and school. Some of the student goals included increasing time on-task in the classroom, improving emotion regulation, and following directions. On average, the students whose parents and teachers engaged in TAPP demonstrated 80% to 90% overall goal attainment. Relative to their performance prior to TAPP, they demonstrated more prosocial interactions, sustained effort completing tasks, and positive coping strategies. Teachers and parents report appreciating the open dialogue that occurred with TAPP and the focus on finding effective solutions instead of reacting to problems. Parents have expressed confidence that their child was better understood, and they reported feeling optimistic about

the success their child is experiencing at school. Another important indicator of successful student outcomes was based on comments made by teachers and parents. One parent said, “I have really appreciated working through this project (TAPP) because we can bounce ideas off each other and we're not on an island.” A teacher reported, “It's been very noticeable with this process. (The child) is more engaged and challenged now in a good way, instead of bored and distracted.”

The school counselor offers the following advice to fellow educators: “This is a great program to get parents more involved. It seems to give them more permission/motivation to be engaged in a nonjudgmental way. They almost seem empowered. It helps teachers have a space to find a solution that they might otherwise not feel supported with. We always left the meetings with positivity and encouragement for the process.”



A Multipronged Approach to Family Engagement

Crown Pointe Academy, Charter School Institute

Submitted by Jessica Welch, JessicaWelch@csi.state.co.us

At Crown Pointe Academy (CPA), family, school, and community engagement is not left to chance—it is a strategically planned, multipronged approach that permeates every layer of school culture. Guided by decades of research highlighting the transformative impact of family-school partnerships (Mapp & Henderson, 2022), CPA designed its Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) with family engagement as a core improvement strategy. The goal: to boost student outcomes, strengthen community bonds, and enhance school culture.

CPA's initiatives include the CPA Family Book Club, Summer Challenges, and Café Con Pan—each designed to engage families in academic partnering, relationship building, and shared learning experiences. CPA's Assistant Principal leads the Family Book Club and Summer Challenges, where students and families read together, discuss prompts, and receive awards for participation. Families select books online as part of this interactive reading experience, reinforcing literacy and community connection.



To deepen community ties, CPA hired a Community Liaison to run Café Con Pan, where parents meet regularly—both in English and Spanish—to discuss school programs, support each other, and share resources. The Community Liaison also organizes home visits and coordinates attendance at community events, like women's empowerment conferences, ensuring families feel seen and valued.

CPA prioritizes ongoing communication through bilingual social media updates, a dedicated school app, weekly newsletters, and open-door policies that welcome families as volunteers, observers, and partners. These efforts are designed to build trust and strong relationships from the first week of school onward.

CPA's strategic family engagement approach has led to notable outcomes. The school boasts a 94.5% attendance rate and holds a Performance rating on the Colorado Academic Report System (CARS). Student retention is high, with many beginning in kindergarten and continuing through 8th grade. Staff turnover remains low, and family-school relationships are thriving. Families report deeper understanding of school programs, stronger advocacy skills, and greater confidence in supporting their children's education.

A Parent's Guide to Navigating the Middle School Transition

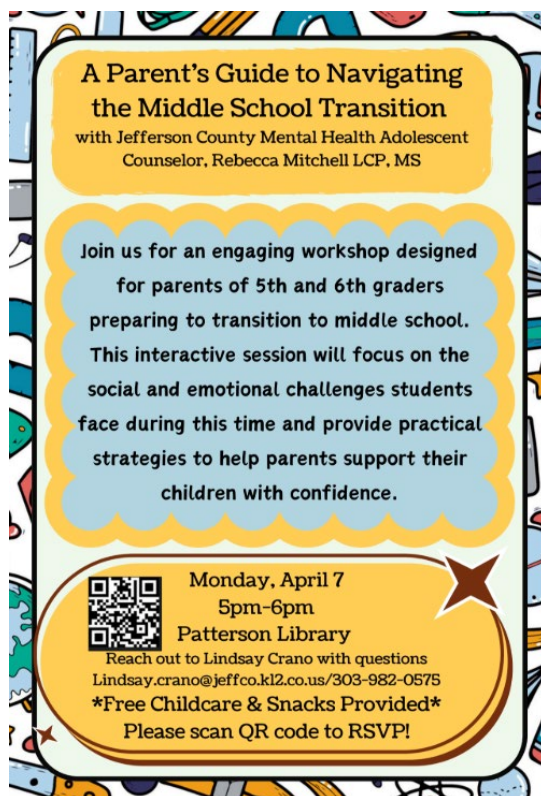
Patterson International Elementary School, Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Lindsay Crano, lindsay.crano@jeffco.k12.co.us

To support students during a critical academic transition, Patterson International in Jeffco implemented a comprehensive family engagement initiative centered around a research-informed parent workshop on the transition to middle school. The goal was to pave the way for successful student experiences during an often difficult transition period.

The Family Engagement Liaison collected qualitative and quantitative data through in-person and virtual surveys, as well as one-on-one conversations with 5th and 6th grade students and their families. Centering family voice, the goal was to understand concerns, questions, and support needs from both student and caregiver perspectives. Common concerns were peer pressure, bullying, social belonging, navigating a larger campus, managing time, and coping with emotional uncertainty.

The Family Engagement Liaison coordinated personalized phone calls to parents and invitation-style tickets, high-quality handouts, thoughtfully prepared take-home bags, and a well-executed interactive presentation. This workshop equipped families with age-appropriate, evidence-based strategies that support social-emotional and executive functioning growth. Parents asked meaningful questions and left with practical tools and a clearer understanding of the middle school transition process.



Feedback surveys of the workshop revealed overwhelmingly positive responses, with participants expressing that the session was highly beneficial and impactful. Follow-up conversations revealed that parents were applying the strategies at home, reinforcing positive habits and communication with their children.

Workshop organizers have several pieces of advice for those looking to replicate the practice. Start with data and family voice. Use surveys and conversations to guide planning based on real concerns. Target transition challenges by addressing social pressures, campus logistics, emotional shifts, and executive functioning. Make it personal by going beyond emails—call families, use thoughtful invitations, and make them feel truly welcomed.

Provide practical tools through sharing clear, usable resources and keep presentations relatable and actionable. Encourage interaction and create space for questions, dialogue, and peer connection to deepen engagement. Follow up through continued support with check-ins, resources, and future touchpoints. Collect feedback and stories to refine and sustain the work. Most importantly, lead with empathy. Acknowledge that transitions are difficult—compassion builds lasting partnerships.

Engage49

School District 49

Submitted by Karen Parks, karen.parks@d49.org

School District 49 encompasses the east side of Colorado Springs and the community of Falcon. It is divided into four zones: Sand Creek, Power, Falcon, and IConnect covering approximately 133 square miles of both urban and rural communities. A goal to align previously siloed and disconnected family engagement initiatives began by forming a team of district family and community liaisons from Title I schools, each zone, and other district departments that directly interact with families. Utilizing the [FSCP Framework rubric](#), the team determined that Designing Capacity Building Opportunities would be the area of focus for the 2024-2025 school year.

The team joined the [FSCP Collaborative](#) to work in conjunction with CDE and other school districts within the Pikes Peak Region to enhance collaborative efforts and to learn from each other. After learning of the team's goals and plans, the D49 Superintendent, Peter Hiltz, suggested that the team have a 'brand' which led them to adopt the name and identity of Engage49.

Through monthly meetings and exchange of experiences and ideas, the team determined that they would implement a monthly publication for families. Family surveys were sent out with an explanation of the planned monthly publication asking for the highest areas of interest that families would like to see addressed by the school district. Based on this information, the team narrowed down topics to the top ten that would be the monthly themes to begin at the start of the school year. These topics included: An introduction to the District-Wide Family Engagement initiatives; Attendance; Parent/Teacher Conferences; Safety and Security; School of Choice Procedures; Standardized Testing; Pathways; Avoiding the Summer Slide; etc. The publications were distributed via the Smore format, making them easily translatable for non-English speaking families. Every issue included a link for families to add questions, suggestions, or comments; and when applicable this feedback was shared with the appropriate district school or department.



The Engage49 team also partnered with other district departments to initiate LIVE events. The goal of the LIVE events was to create a space specifically for parent and family voices. A group of experts were invited to a panel and who, following introductions, provided a brief explanation of their area of expertise, and then the floor was opened for questions and discussion. By design, the families who attended drove the discussion. The agenda was dinner, panel discussion, and then networking, so attendees could converse directly with the panel representatives if they wanted. By the end of the school year, Engage49 hosted three LIVE events: Health and Hazards, Safety and Security, and Career Technical Education.

The monthly publications were evaluated through the provided Smore program analysis that showed number of views, clicks on links, feedback, and responses to embedded surveys. The Engage LIVE events were evaluated via a follow-up survey that was accessible to all attendees. Challenges included a struggle with promotion consistency to ensure that all district families received both the publication and awareness of the LIVE events. Engage49 is continuing to work on raising awareness and building the brand to improve promotion and enhance participation.

The greatest success was the team effort, including the collaboration with many different entities. The feedback from families was crucial, as well, so including multiple opportunities for family input is key. Finally, be diligent in raising awareness within district departments, schools, and families by presenting the initiative to district School Accountability Committees, District Accountability Committees, principals' meetings, school staff meetings, and Parent-Teacher Associations.

Family Engagement Liaison Professional Learning Communities

Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Susan Kimes-Demboski, Susan.Kimes-Demboski@jeffco.k12.co.us

Jeffco's Family Engagement Liaisons (FELs) serve 31 Title I schools. The FEL program's core mission is to build strong, genuine partnerships between schools and families, empowering all as equal education partners. The Professional Learning Community (PLC) model's goal was to empower FELs to navigate complexities, ensure consistent and coherent family belonging, and continuously refine practices through joint planning and critical reflection. Jeffco's FEL-PLC model was planned and implemented through a vital collaboration with Scholastic's F.A.C.E. (Family and Community Engagement) specialists.

FELs engaged in three unique PLC groups: Building Family Capacity, focusing on Elementary Literacy, READ Plans, and Illustrative Math; Building Diverse Family Voice and Agency; and Bridging Grade Level Transitions. A key focus was fostering shared power and ownership of student academic success. This was achieved by creating the conditions necessary for all families to communicate high expectations, support learning at home, monitor progress, guide education, and effectively advocate for their child's needs. Strategies were continually elevated through data-informed reflection.



Successful outcomes of FEL-PLCs were evident in tangible examples of shared practice. These communities fostered [collaborative data analysis](#), significantly enhancing the data literacy of FELs. This improved data literacy led to more responsive and strategic decision-making. Improved communication among Liaisons, stronger team cohesion, and a heightened sense of collective identity were all direct results of this collaborative model. Furthermore, the PLCs fostered enhanced accountability to district-wide outcomes. Crucially, these communities culminated in the authentic integration of diverse family perspectives into discussions, planning, and decision-making processes.

Challenges included consistent PLC meeting times, common strategy implementation, and calibrating data collection. Feedback from FELs overwhelmingly highlighted the impact of the PLC model. They found immense benefit in learning from their colleagues and collaborating across different schools and grade levels.

Bringing FELs together around a common goal and purpose, then collecting, sharing, and reflecting on data to implement shared strategies, really puts learning into action collaboratively across schools. Make sure to dedicate time for PLCs to build and practice effective meeting structures, norms, and facilitation. Identifying 'community' categories that genuinely align with school and district goals will ensure the work has real impact. Finally, building the team's data literacy will be key to driving smart PLC decisions and next steps.

Individualized Learning Plan Family Meetings

RiseUp Community School, Denver Public Schools

Submitted by Karen Ikegami, kikegami@riseupcommunityschool.net

At RiseUp Community School in Denver Public Schools, families requested access to information that went beyond portal reports and was more efficient than reaching out to individual teachers and counselors. After conducting focus groups, staff came together to design a student/family/school meeting where detailed information could be shared and discussed.



Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) meetings are short check-in meetings between the family and school. The goal of ILP meetings is to share information so that stakeholders can partner to support the unique goals of each student and ensure post-secondary goals are met.

At the beginning of the year and after each grading period, students reviewed their goals and progress and prepared to share this with families. The school helped by preparing student reports that included grade and credit trends, attendance trends, behavior reports, and graduation timelines. Families signed up to review progress with their students and the school staff during a 45-minute meeting. In order to make sure all families had the

opportunity for an ILP meeting, all staff members in the school were paired with 5-10 students and meetings were held over 1.5 days. In order to provide the data that families were asking for, the school created a new internal data tracking system that pulls data from the SDS and from local input sources and creates a visual report. This report was the starting point for students and families. Families had time in the ILP meetings to ask questions about specific data points they would like to explore.

The school has seen an increase in student achievement marked by on time graduation, increased course passing rates, increased attendance rates, and lower behavior incidents. Most significant may be an increase in students' abilities to take actions and request support from family members. Families reported feeling aware of student progress and confident in the actions they were taking at home to support post-secondary plans. In the first year, family attendance at ILP meetings went from 2% to 75% and have remained steady at just under 80% for the past four years. In subsequent years, the practice was evaluated by analyzing the type and depth of family questions and most recently has been evaluated by courses passed and attendance. The main challenge to the practice remains that not all families attend and, while reports are sent home, the depth of information sharing is limited.

In order to create meaningful family meetings for a school, the design process should be responsive to family needs and so focus groups would be a critical starting point. Training all staff to hold meetings will give the meetings a footing in the school as a central practice.

Introducing District Leadership to the Community

Widefield School District 3

Submitted by Carlos Lopez, lopezc@wsd3.org

Widefield School District 3 in the Pikes Peak Region has made it a goal to deepen family engagement across the district through the initiative, Connect with Widefield. This initiative has three goals: to improve student success, to build trust and collaboration, and to strengthen community resources.



As part of the district's goal to build trust and collaboration, a key initial step was to introduce Widefield's district leadership. This was particularly important during years where significant staff turnover occurred. This practice served to familiarize the school and district community with the superintendent and other district leaders, fostering transparency and approachability.

Through Connect with Widefield's Family, School, and Community Partnership (FSCP) Core Team, made up of district leaders and parent partners, introducing district leadership to the community was accomplished primarily using three strategies. The first was scheduling one-on-one meetings and interviews with district leaders. The second was writing and publishing newsletter articles featuring the superintendent and other district leaders. Lastly, Connect with Widefield's FSCP Core Team created and shared social media posts introducing the superintendent and other district leaders.

Articles written from the perspective of the FSCP Core Team members, particularly parent partners, not only increased the awareness of district leaders among the school community but also increased the potential for increased engagement. After publication and circulation of articles, community members were likely to see featured personnel as approachable and integral to the functioning of the school district.

While the program was not formally evaluated this year, future evaluation may include use of website analytics to determine frequency of downloads and/or interactions via the district website. In addition, questions may be included on annual surveys requesting feedback on the role that such publications played in the perceptions of parents and community as related to featured school and/or district personnel.

To replicate this practice, consider using social media for short video introductions, as well as opportunities for live Q&A sessions with leaders. Additionally, ensure articles and posts are accessible and translated as needed.

Parent and Family Academy Series

Pueblo School District 60

Submitted by Xavier Madrid, xavier.madrid@pueblod60.org

Pueblo School District 60 is committed to building trusting relationships with families of 29 different schools by fostering inclusive, welcoming environments and providing culturally informed tools for school system navigation. Efforts to implement the Parent and Family Academy Series were led by the district's Parent and Family Engagement Coordinator under the Department of Student Support Services. School-relationship surveys, stakeholder committees, and community partners and organizations that saw the need for a network of trust and shared responsibility for student and family success were all utilized for successful implementation.

Pueblo School District 60 prioritized creating a positive school climate and strengthening engagement through the Parent and Family Academy Series. One such event, Infinite Campus Night, equipped parents with the tools to monitor their child's grades and attendance, promoting active involvement in academic progress. Another event, CPR/First Aid Night, reinforced the importance of personal responsibility and school safety by providing families with lifesaving skills that support a secure learning environment. Additionally, the district hosted a series of mental and physical wellness workshops and presentations covering topics such as healthy eating, adolescent development, behavior management, importance of attendance, and suicide prevention. By affirming diverse perspectives and ensuring that their input was taken and turned into action, these events worked to remove barriers that have historically limited family engagement. As a result, families became more confident navigating school systems, advocating for their children, and being a part of their students' school.

Stakeholder surveys to guide event planning and ensure topics met families' needs were key to the implementation efforts. After each event, feedback surveys helped identify areas for improvement and structure of future events. One parent of an 8th grade student shared: "Please do more events like these—they make students feel powerful and see the leader inside of them." A key challenge was getting families to attend, often due to travel constraints.



Event organizers have several pieces of feedback for other districts. Build trust through consistent and culturally respectful outreach. Start small with accessible, family-focused events that meet real needs expressed through surveys or direct contact. Use community partners when able, gather feedback, and ensure families feel seen, heard, and valued especially in more than just English. Empower them with tools, not just information, and always prioritize relationships over attendance numbers.



Community-Driven Refinement of Mission, Values, and JEDI Commitments

Montessori Del Mundo, Charter School Institute

Submitted by Jessica Welch, JessicaWelch@csi.state.co.us

At Montessori del Mundo (MdM), equity and inclusion are not static ideals—they are dynamic commitments, shaped and reshaped by the voices of the school community. In a bold, innovative process, MdM invited students, families, staff, alumni, and community partners to co-create the school's mission, core values, and Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) statement. This wasn't a one-time event or a simple survey—it was a sustained dialogue that allowed every stakeholder to reflect on what belonging, justice, and inclusion should feel like within the school walls.

Montessori del Mundo Charter School

Growing tomorrow's bilingual leaders



Through listening circles, focus groups, and open forums, the school created safe spaces for honest conversations about lived experiences and aspirations. The process led to more than just refined words on a page. It catalyzed tangible shifts in policy and culture, ensuring that the school's guiding principles actively shaped daily life. One standout example of this is MdM's proactive policy protecting hair autonomy and affirming cultural identity—adopted even before the CROWN Act became law in Colorado. Recognizing the impact of hair-based discrimination on student well-being, the school formalized protections that allowed students to express their full identities confidently and without fear.

This practice illustrates how MdM translates dialogue into action, embedding community voice at the heart of its governance and culture. The school's evolving mission and values are living documents, constantly enriched by the diverse perspectives of those it serves, ensuring that every student feels seen, respected, and empowered.

Since engaging in this process, MdM's staff survey results show a marked increase in the percentage of staff who agree or strongly agree that they feel seen, heard, and valued in their role. Additionally, there has been a marked increase in inclusive practices in the classroom, based on regular classroom observations by the leadership team. The school has also seen a marked increase in student retention at the upper grades, which historically had the highest percentage of student turnover. Finally, the school has organized a team including staff, parents, current and former students, and leadership team to develop a 25-year strategic plan; this group of stakeholders has developed a tool to measure the operationalizing of shared JEDI commitments which also was a direct result of the school's initial community-driven work.

ELD Student Leadership Team Provides School Tours for Multilingual Families

Rocky Top Middle School, Adams 12 Five Star Schools

Submitted by A'ndra Warren, andra.n.warren@adams12.org

The English Language Development (ELD) Student Leadership Team at Rocky Top Middle School (RTMS) provided school tours for multilingual families to increase family engagement through improved language access and to foster a sense of belonging for students. RTMS recognized that Spanish-speaking families needed more support to navigate school systems while multilingual learners (MLs) could benefit from leadership opportunities to enhance their speaking and listening skills. The result was training ELD students to give tours to new Spanish-speaking students and families.

The planning and implementation of the practice involved the school's principal, the Spanish-Language Support Liaison, and the ELD teachers. The ELD teachers provided class time to teach presentation skills and prepare students to take on leadership roles.

The practice included personalized intakes for all new students, where families met with the Spanish-Language Support Liaison. Following the intake, the Liaison made follow-up phone calls to families. She also conducted class visits and provided in-class lessons on public speaking. These lessons aligned with World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) skills in speaking and listening, giving students practical applications for their language development. The Spanish-Language Support Liaison conducted one-on-one check-ins with all students, not just ELD students, and connected with students in the cafeteria when possible. The program has fostered student leaders, like one who noticed a nervous new student and took the initiative to welcome him with questions that eased his anxiety. As part of the welcoming experience, students received RTMS t-shirts and pizza.



School staff evaluated the practice through student engagement and enthusiasm for leadership roles, as well as increased participation from Spanish-speaking families. One challenge was carving out time during the school day to practice presentation skills, as it sometimes conflicted with instructional time.

For those looking to replicate this practice, the team emphasizes patience and persistence with students, especially when building public speaking skills. Selecting students for leadership roles should prioritize marginalized students, such as ELD learners or those with frequent behavior issues, giving them a chance to shine.

Expanding Family Leadership at DPS

Denver Public Schools

Submitted by Jasmine Rigby, jasmine_rigby@dpsk12.net

During the 2024–25 school year, DPS Family and Community Engagement (FACE) significantly expanded their Family Leadership program opportunities. In previous years, FACE offered around five in-person programs along with monthly FACE University webinars. This year, they made a deliberate effort to remove barriers—particularly around language and accessibility—and to increase opportunities for families to engage in meaningful, personalized ways.

FACE hosted 17 different Parent Leadership Programs, with an impressive total of 255 families participating across English, Spanish, and Vietnamese sessions. This expansion was led by an incredible team of the Lead Family Empowerment + Title I Specialist, Title I Specialist, and Asian Family Engagement Specialist. They collaborated closely with school-site leaders, providing training and coaching to support successful program implementation. Their work was further supported by generous donors who contributed food and giveaways, committed school leadership teams, and a grant from Highly Capable Kids.

To improve accessibility, many programs were offered virtually, with both morning and afternoon options. They recommended programs based on staff availability and capacity to ensure consistent follow-through. DPS currently offers four key family leadership programs: Highly Capable Kids, Parenting Partners, Family Advocacy, Calm and Kind Family, and Family Meals. Title I funds helped provide extra-duty pay for school-site leaders.

The impact of these programs is evident. 100% of families reported they would recommend the program they attended; 75% expressed a willingness to help their school recruit for future sessions; 85% indicated a desire to volunteer more in their child’s school; and 12 parents stepped up to take leadership roles in facilitating future programs!



FACE used pre- and post-surveys and made real-time adjustments to new programs using session-based evaluations. One ongoing challenge was school-site facilitator retention. While recruitment can be demanding, those who successfully launched a program often found renewed motivation thanks to the positive family feedback and increased parent engagement.

For districts launching similar programs, supporting facilitators is critical. FACE created detailed outreach plans—including call scripts, multilingual email templates, flyers, and RSVP forms. Donated or parent-provided snacks and giveaways further helped build a welcoming atmosphere. Attending sessions, taking photos, and offering support onsite were key. For educators, the message is clear: meet families where they are. Consider their schedules, offer hybrid options when possible, and don’t hesitate to send frequent reminders.

Family Listening Sessions

Greeley-Evans School District 6

Submitted by David Reyes, dreyes@greeleyschools.org

Family Listening Sessions in Greeley-Evans School District 6 aim to build trusting relationships between families, educators, and the superintendent. These sessions provide a space for families to share experiences and perspectives to help shape district decisions. They also fostered strong networks among families, strengthened community connections, and supported families in developing their roles as leaders and agents of change within the school community.

Administrators, parent and family advocates, Family Center staff, and the Superintendent planned and implemented the Family Listening sessions. Together, they organized three sessions throughout the school year. The sessions were intentionally designed to elevate family voice, build trust, and strengthen relationships across the school community. Families were invited through personal phone calls made by parent advocates, administrators, and teachers. Each session started off with an activity called Conocimiento, which allows families to talk about themselves and begin to make social connections with other families. Then, families were asked to give feedback on three questions during the first listening session: What are your hopes and dreams for your student(s)? What does a welcoming school look like to you? What could schools do to better meet your and your students' needs? By listening to family perspectives, school leaders gained valuable insight into student needs, classroom experiences, and cultural dynamics that may not surface through traditional feedback channels. This practice has contributed to overall school improvement by identifying barriers to learning, informing culturally responsive practices, and encouraging families to take on leadership roles. Listening sessions build upon each other through gathering responses, and looking for common themes to guide the topic for the next listening session. This ensured the practice remained relevant and culturally responsive.



Listening sessions were evaluated through a combination of family and staff feedback, attendance data, and the insights shared by families. A key indicator of success was families' willingness to return and engage in the following listening sessions. The district sees these sessions as opportunities for capacity-building to empower families to co-produce solutions alongside school leaders. One challenge during implementation was having the right interpreter services available. Families were asked to RSVP via a google form, which allowed them to identify the number of adults that were going to attend, number of children, and their preferred language. If families didn't complete the RSVP form, they may not have their preferred language available for interpretation.

Any district wanting to replicate the practice of Family Listening Sessions should start by building a strong planning team that includes administrators, family advocates, and community engagement staff. Ground the sessions in trust, respect and authentic listening. Use consistent models to establish a welcoming structure. Most importantly, follow through, use family input gathered to shape decisions, and communicate back to families how their feedback influenced change. One team member shared, "What made this work was not just listening, it was families seeing that what they said actually led to change."

FSCP Nights Featuring Community Partners

Widefield School District 3

Submitted by Carlos Lopez, lopezc@wsd3.org

Widefield School District 3 in the Pikes Peak Region has made it a goal to deepen family engagement across the district through the initiative, Connect with Widefield. This initiative has three goals: to improve student success, to build trust and collaboration, and to strengthen community resources. To reach these goals, Connect with Widefield is coordinated by the Family, School, and Community Partnership (FSCP) Core Team, made up of district leaders and parent partners.



FSCP PARENT NIGHT

COME JOIN US!

FEBRUARY 27, 2025
06:00 PM - 07:00 PM
S.A. WILSON GYM
VIRTUAL AVAILABLE: meet.google.com/wmz-ntnf-jgx

About The Event!

Join us for an overview of services provided by the Salvation Army Fountain Valley Corps, featuring guest Quiana Vargas, Salvation Army Director of Operations.

Attendees will get a crash course on the resources and support available to them within the Fountain Valley community. We will highlight the wide range of services and organizations accessible within our community center, providing valuable information on where to turn for assistance with:

- state benefits & recertification
- medical care
- taxes
- food
- utility bills
- and much more!

Contact us
719-391-3000

Website
www.wsd3.org

By combining the two goals of building trust and collaboration and strengthening community resources, Widefield aimed to build mutually beneficial relationships with local businesses and organizations to create a network of community partners. These partners then supported the district and provided resources or opportunities for students and their families.

FSCP Core Team members partnered with local organizations and collaborated with representatives for monthly team meetings. During the meetings, Community Partners discussed how they may be of service to the wider community. Core Team members and Community Partners worked together to highlight the partnering organization and their services in an engaging digital newsletter and subsequent FSCP Night.

A newsletter was developed and posted on the Connect with Widefield website as well as via social media in hopes of providing contact information and an extensive report of available resources

for local families. FSCP Nights typically featured a brief introduction by Connect with Widefield followed by a more in-depth presentation by the sponsoring Community Partner, typically no more than 30 minutes. The session ended with Q and A and opportunities for attendees to receive personal consultation and/or support. One such program featured contacts from the local Salvation Army.

While the practice was not formally evaluated this year, common challenges included under attendance by district stakeholders. Increased future success with the program may include requesting RSVPs to gauge attendance, using interviews or short audio/video teasers online to promote the event, and using surveys so that respondents may vote on which FSCP Night topics may be the most beneficial prior to scheduling.

Parent Engagement Night

Centauri Middle and High School, North Conejos School District

Submitted by Jessica Shawcroft, jesshawcroft24@northconejos.com

Historically, North Conejos School District in La Jara, Colorado has had strong family involvement surrounding sports but low family engagement with other activities. When middle school students shared that they felt their parents weren't understanding their needs and that even though they're older, they still want to talk with their parents about things going on in their lives, the district jumped on the opportunity.

The goal of Parent Engagement Night was to increase communication between students and parents by providing an opportunity to share ideas with one another and gain skills to understand one another better. Two middle school students were integral in the planning of the Parent Engagement Night, providing the school counselor with suggestions of topics to cover. As soon as the idea was well organized, school counselors from the middle school and high school advertised Parent Engagement Night weeks before the event date, and held the event in April.



In preparation for the event, the students created a survey that they sent to all students and asked their peers to list what they would hope to see come from the Parent Engagement Night. The form included topics they wished they could talk with their parents about, topics they felt misunderstood on, things they needed more help on, and if they would come to the event. The middle school counselor made a similar survey for parents. The agenda for the night was based on the survey results, which indicated that the most desired topic from students and parents was communication. Parent Engagement Night provided families with valuable tools, strategies, and insights to better understand their children's developmental needs and how to effectively support them at home.

The practice has not yet been evaluated. In the future, staff plan to utilize parent and student feedback to continuously improve the event. The biggest challenge was attendance and the team is working on ways to increase that. They have created a nine-month calendar which outlines the dates for future Parent Engagement Nights, as well as future topics to discuss. The calendar is subject to change, as they want to hear directly from families about what they would like.

Recommendations for others include asking students and parents for feedback, and learning what holds them back from attending these events.

Redesigned School-Family Conferences

Montview Elementary School, Aurora Public Schools

Submitted by Hannah LeCount, hclecount@aurorak12.org

Before becoming a [community school](#) in the 2023-2024 school year, Montview Elementary School, located in Aurora, had minimal parent involvement. With ‘powerful student and family engagement’ being one of the six key practices of a community school, Montview sought to transform their traditional parent-teacher conferences into an experience that was more inclusive, collaborative, and meaningful. The Assistant Principal (AP) and Community Schools Coordinator (CSC) collaborated on and planned this initiative in the summer of 2023. That same team, in addition to parents, revised the practice slightly in the summer of 2024.

The AP and CSC designed a 30-minute structured conference that included getting background on the parent's school experiences, what they hoped for their child this school year, and what support they needed to help at home. They also added two goals that parents, teachers, and students made together in the conference: an SEL goal and an attendance goal. Literacy and math goals were also shared, including examples of how teachers will support students in meeting this goal. Conferences ended with sharing what parents and students are most excited for this year, and any worries or concerns they have. In the spring conferences, parents and students reflected on their favorite memories of the year, and what resources they might need for summer.



Montview leadership allocated funding to provide subs during the school day to allow teachers time for the conferences. Funds were also used to purchase flashcards, workbooks, fiction and nonfiction books in English and Spanish, pencils, and crayons to give away during conferences. Finally, snacks were provided to parents when they arrived. There was also a selfie station where parents could take pictures with their children.

Montview leadership sent surveys to parents for feedback on what worked well and what might be changed to make the experience even more meaningful. Leadership shared this feedback with teachers to ensure parent requests were included in future conferences. Outcomes included increased attendance, increased family partnerships, and increased achievement across the school, as measured by both district and state assessments.

As with any new initiative, some staff buy-in varied. Some were more hesitant to release control from teacher to parent and were slower to embrace this collaborative approach. Leadership worked to celebrate those teachers implementing with fidelity and achieving strong results.

Recommendations include having a clear, structured agenda and template for teachers to use. Record one or two examples to watch and discuss with teachers as they prepare for conferences. Observe as many conferences as possible to give teachers feedback, and model techniques.

Student Voice in Family Engagement

Sand Creek High School, School District 49

Submitted by Amy Sanchez-Martinez, amy.sanchezmartinez@d49.org

At Sand Creek High School in Colorado Springs, the goal of Student Voice in Family Engagement was to build the capacity of young adults to drive their family's engagement in ways that work for each of them rather than expecting all families to adjust to one manner of engagement and partnership with the school.

To accomplish this, the principal at Sand Creek High School used three empathy interview questions to structure preliminary conversations with twelve students on a principal's advisory taskforce: 1) What do you like about our school? 2) What would make this school a better place for you? and 3) How would you like our staff and your family to work together to best support you? The student taskforce then led small groups of a cross-section of 10% of the total student population to learn about what they need to engage their families in their education. Immediately following these small groups, the student taskforce analyzed what their peers wrote and discussed to provide recommendations to the school for family engagement in the subsequent school year. At the end of this analysis, students requested to rename themselves the "Student Voice Board" and recommended that the school provide families with quick resources to better understand graduation/on-track expectations by grade level as well as recommendations to understand students as people.

As a result, the school designed [On Track and Brain Development Cards](#) in English and Spanish that were the focus of Back to School Night and made available in all school offices. In addition, students learned about their on-track performance in class to review on a regular basis, and staff reviewed on-track data on a monthly basis to coach/champion students. Tips for conversations with staff became the focus of the monthly family conference newsletters in [September 2024](#) and [February 2025](#), which were viewed collectively over 11,000 times.

Practices were evaluated on a monthly basis through on-track to graduation data by grade level. The goal each month was for 85% of students to demonstrate on-track performance. Monthly data averaged at 75% of all students demonstrating on-track performance with semester performance averaging at 80% of students performing on track to graduation. Qualitatively, parents began to request data asking if their students are on track rather than a grade check. The primary challenge was to reframe success with the view that deep relational quality matters more than surface-level quantity.

Utilizing student voice as the cornerstone of family engagement calls on a school to emphasize flexibility in engagement as well as find ways to support students in leading their family's engagement rather than being a silent or passive member in it. As a result of listening to student voice in family engagement, the school needs to spend time and effort in creating tangible resources that empower students in their education and growth so they may be the driving partner in family engagement in ways that meet their needs and those of their families.



Partnering with Families to Empower Students: Our Approach

This year, we are planning for meaningful conversations about student performance, to include growth/achievement against standards, work completion, and interactions with others.

Students, please make an effort to attend as you are the primary driver of your education. We believe in the power of your voice!



Teachers and Parents as Partners

Battle Rock Charter School, Montezuma-Cortez School District

Submitted by Jenn Morris, jmorris@battlerockschool.org, and Susan Sheridan, ssheridan2@unl.edu

Teachers and Parents as Partners (TAPP) is a research-based approach that builds relationships between parents and teachers to help students succeed. Typically used for students who are struggling with social, behavioral or academic challenges, it gives parents voice and promotes goal attainment through meaningful home-school partnerships. Battle Rock Charter School in Montezuma-Cortez has enjoyed a long-standing tradition guided by principles of relationships, safety, inclusion, holistic and authentic education, and high expectations. TAPP complements these principles through its emphasis on strengths, partnerships, capacity-building, and individualized experiences.



A lead teacher and a member of the school's leadership team was instrumental in bringing TAPP to Battle Rock. She learned of the program through collaborators at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, who also worked with members of CDE's Family, School, Community Partnerships office.

TAPP actively invites and reinforces parents' perspectives, values, and wishes into educational decision making. Through proactive invitations to engage, requests for information and expertise, use of open-ended questions, ongoing two-way communication, and other partnership-building strategies, educators set the stage for and promote parents' roles as essential collaborators. Structurally, TAPP augments systems already in place for students and families, such as PBIS and MTSS. In particular, as a Tier 2 or Tier 3 approach, TAPP supports individual students' unique and individualized needs.

To use TAPP at Battle Rock, the lead teacher first participated in a self-paced, virtual TAPP training program. The program included a personal coach who helped her hone her delivery of TAPP, introduce it to other teachers and parents at the school, and support its implementation. For each student identified for TAPP, the lead teacher met with the student's parent(s) and teacher three times over approximately eight weeks to identify as a team what they could do together to support student success. The first meeting involved identifying the student's strengths, needs and goals. The second meeting involved understanding students' skills and behaviors, and co-creating collaborative home-school plans for helping students' achieve their goals. Parents and teachers implemented the plans over a few weeks, continuing to communicate regularly with one another. They also continued to monitor students' progress using simple tools and procedures. During the final meeting, the lead teacher reviewed the home-school data, discussed whether goals were met, helped modify plans to support continued progress, and recommended methods for parents and teachers to continue their partnership.

As a data-driven approach, teams determine a practical approach to monitor students' performance or behaviors, and their progress toward mutually-determined goals. They collect information daily to assess students' current skills, and new skills that develop as a result of the partnership. Some of the student goals established at Battle Rock included reducing the number of times a student left their assigned seat at school,

and the number of times they got out of bed at home. Others were reducing meltdowns or tantrums occurring both at home and at school, and increasing the student's ability to follow directions. Parents reported that they have seen significant improvements in their children's behavior and overall self-awareness. The parents felt like they learned more about their student's behaviors and what their students needed during hard moments.

Relative to before they started TAPP, students showed an increase in social skills, building self-awareness, and learning to take feedback. Parents also reported improvements in their parenting skills by understanding the function of their child's behaviors and becoming more intentional in communications with their child. According to one parent, "I noticed a change in [my child] and her being able to take feedback with a more positive response and not turning everything into a huge meltdown. She was able to recover at home and even apologized for her behavior."

According to the lead teacher, "The TAPP program has been a wonderful complement to our school. Through it, I have built valuable skills that have allowed me to mediate conversations and foster positive and productive relationships between families and teachers."

Back to School Bash

Alamosa School District

Submitted by Beth Quinlan, bquinlan@alamosaschools.org

As part of the Alamosa School District's Strategic Plan, one of the focuses continues to be community engagement. The goals of the Back to School Bash were to create lasting relationships between families, the school district, and community partners; assist families with school registration; provide students with free backpacks filled with supplies; and connect families with community resources. Every child in the district and their families were invited.

Planning for this event began early in the spring of 2024. The Alamosa School District (ASD) took the lead in bringing community partners together to begin building relationships to better serve students and their families. Those involved in the planning and implementation of this event included ASD staff, Shooting Stars Cultural and Leadership Center, Boys and Girls Club of the San Luis Valley, Alamosa Library, San Luis Valley Behavioral Health, Area Health Education Center, Adelante, San Luis Valley Interagency Oversight Group, and the Center for Restorative Practices.

The Back to School Bash was scheduled for July 29th, 30th, and 31st at three different locations in Alamosa. The event focused on the three most student-populated bus stops in the district. Families were greeted at each site by district administration personnel, secretaries, parent liaisons, and numerous bilingual volunteers who assisted students in registering for the 2024-2025 school year. Families were able to get free haircuts and received free backpacks filled with school supplies provided by the district and community partners. Families could then walk around Zapata Park, play in the bouncy house, meet with the district's superintendents and other community members, and enjoy a free hot dog and ice cream. In total, almost 600 backpacks were handed out.

Each family was given a QR code linking them to an evaluation that included a few brief questions such as, "What can the school district improve on for next year?", "Do you feel valued in the Alamosa School District?", and "What resources would you like to see offered next year?" Providing events at remote locations always creates challenges like access to electricity and Wi-Fi. Mobile hotspots and portable generators addressed these challenges.

Implementing events like this takes a lot of hard work, collaboration, and early planning. But for the ASD community, it was a great way to connect families to resources and create positive relationships between students, families, and schools from the very start of the school year.



Community Clothing Exchange

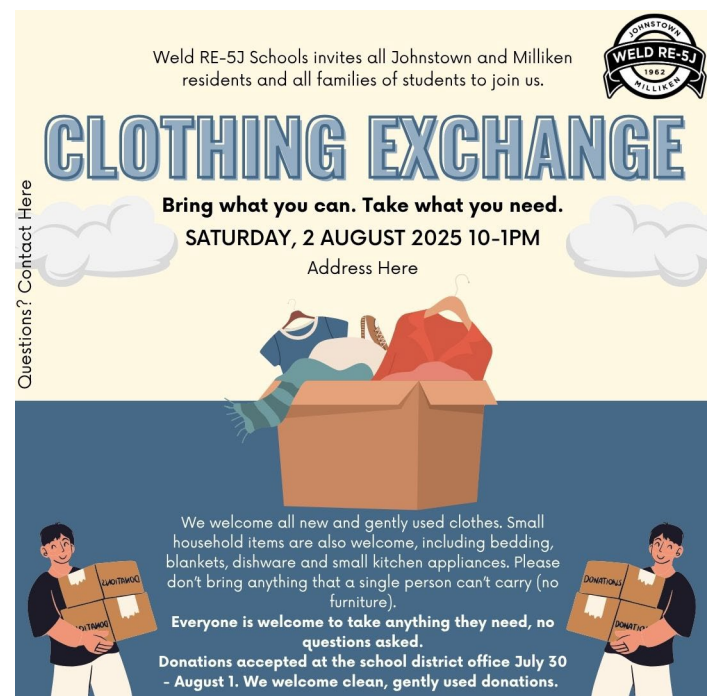
Weld Re-5J School District

Submitted by Alexandra Ham, alexandra.ham@weldre5j.org

To support families who face financial challenges, Weld RE-5J created a Community Clothing Exchange event. The goal was to rehome clean, gently used clothing and small home supplies such as bedding, bathroom essentials, and kitchen items rather than them being donated to a larger company or thrown away.

The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Coordinator and Multilingual Learner (ML) Coordinator worked together to plan and implement this event. The ML Coordinator called Spanish speaking families to personally invite them.

The theme of the event was "Bring what you can. Take what you need". The event took place in a large room at the district office. Clothing was laid out on tables or hung up on racks and sorted by gender and size. Families were invited to shop at any point in a four-hour window. Donations were accepted for 1 week prior. Families were incredibly grateful for the opportunity to share items with each other, shop for needed supplies, and generally support their neighbors. Many people called in the weeks after asking if donations were still being accepted and when the next event would be. This event contributed to a positive district climate and positive student outcomes by providing needed supplies to families in a way that maintained their dignity. Everyone who shopped brought something to donate, and many people donated without shopping.



No official evaluation took place at the first event. The response was overwhelming and positive. At the next event, Weld RE-5J will evaluate how many donations are made and track how many families shop. Challenges included more donations than expected, which was difficult to manage; organizers needed more space, more volunteers, and a better way to sort the donations.

Social media was helpful to get the word out, but personal phone calls inviting families in need was most effective. Advice for others is to have the invite come from someone families already have a relationship with.

Community Meetings

Alamosa School District

Submitted by Genesis Escalon, gescalon@alamosaschools.org

Community meetings were initiated in 2023 in the Alamosa School District with 23 school staff members and representatives from various local community-based organizations. The initial invitees to these meetings began by engaging with school staff and Community-Based Organization members where relationships had already been established. Since then, there has been significant growth, with almost 60 participating community members from different organizations. This demonstrates the district's collective commitment to working together for students, families, and community. This effort is supported and sustained by the district's family engagement team, along with the MTSS Coordinator, under the guidance of the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent.

The community meetings provide a platform for students, school staff, and community partners to come together and openly discuss the needs and support for students. By actively involving community stakeholders in the decision-making process, Alamosa ensures programs are tailored to meet the specific needs of students and their families. Partnerships with local organizations enhance the resources available for students, enabling the district to implement innovative programs focused on academic support, such as tutoring services, mentorship programs, internships, mental health services, and extracurricular activities.



This practice was evaluated through the use of check-ins, along with preferences gathered from various agencies regarding what they would like to see addressed in the meetings. Alamosa collected this input through a Google survey, enabling staff to tailor the agenda to specific needs and concerns. This approach ensured that all voices were heard and that discussions were relevant and productive. By actively seeking feedback from participants, they created an inclusive environment that fostered engagement and collaboration, ultimately leading to more effective outcomes and the successful implementation of shared ideas and initiatives.

To replicate this practice, start by building relationships with community agencies. Attend community events and collaborate with different organizations. Be sure to incorporate input from students and agencies, and consider current happenings in the school district for effective engagement.

Cooking Matters

Centauri Middle School, North Conejos School District

Submitted by Jessica Shawcroft, jesshawcroft24@northconejos.com

As a rural community, North Conejos School District understands the importance of increasing student and family awareness on available community resources. One way Centauri Middle School (CMS) accomplished this was by partnering with Cooking Matters, a program that “provides resources to help parents and caregivers develop their skills when shopping for and cooking healthy foods on a budget.” The goal was to increase student and family knowledge of their community resources, as well as utilize the community resources to meet the needs of students. Many don’t know how to cook for themselves from scratch but have expressed a desire to learn; Cooking Matters teaches meal planning, budgeting, cooking from scratch, and basic cooking skills that benefit members of the school and community.

The school counselor, in partnership with CMS' PTO, surveyed students about what clubs they wanted to see developed at CMS. Many asked for a cooking club. Familiar with Cooking Matters, the school counselor reached out to see if they would come to the middle school and gear the program to the students.

CMS hosted the cooking club with Cooking Matters in the cafeteria once a week for four weeks. Participants from the elementary, middle, and high schools all participated. Cooking Matters staff brought a variety of grocery items with certain cooking skills planned for the students to learn. The students were put in groups and worked with each other on cutting/knife skills, cooking over an open flame, learning about nutrition, and eating the rainbow, to name a few. Students not only learned cooking skills, but also the benefits of budgeting and how to use common household staples to make a meal. The students enjoyed time with friends and family in a relaxed environment while also learning skills they will use for their lifetimes. The students kept the recipes to use at home and began to build their own recipe book.



Families filled out an evaluation form after each class for the instructor to have, though the school did not have a major part in the evaluation. The school counselor and the instructor of the Cooking Matters class kept in contact throughout the week to reflect on each class. At the end of the four weeks, the instructor and the school counselor discussed future implementation and a few ways to implement the program that would allow for more students to join. Ideas included holding the class during the school day, offering Cooking Matters in multiple buildings so the class can cater to the different age levels more appropriately, and offering the class at different times of the year to catch students when they aren’t busy with after school activities - all of which is good advice for anyone looking to replicate the practice.



Engaging and Supporting Middle School Students through Community Partnerships

Carmel Community School, Harrison School District 2

Submitted by Debbie Wynn, dwynn@hsd2.org

In 2022, Carmel Middle School in Harrison School District 2 was renamed to Carmel Community School. A community school establishes strong community partnerships to assist the school in addressing the needs of the whole child. The trusting relationships with community partners allows students at Carmel to benefit from the community's expertise, resources, and support. Two such examples are the Pearls of Wisdom and Young Men of Alpha programs.



Pearls of Wisdom served approximately thirty-five girls each year. Students applied and were selected by the school administration team at the beginning of the school year. This program was designed and sponsored by the members of the local Colorado Springs (CO) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated. The goal of Pearls of Wisdom is to influence young girls' character development by empowering them to pursue educational excellence, career aspirations, leadership skills, a positive family and social life, and to understand healthy lifestyles.

Students went on field trips and listened to speakers, both of which exposed them to: career, cultural, and educational opportunities in the community; art appreciation; the importance of their physical and mental health and the environment; and educating themselves on the importance of self-confidence, health and wellness, good dental practices, hygiene and grooming. Students also had opportunities to attend summer STEM camps. The program was evaluated based on pre-and-post surveys, oral testimonies, attendance at the Pearls of Wisdom meetings, and improved self-esteem and personal growth as evidenced by changes in attitudes.

The Young Men of Alpha is a program for boys in grades 6-8 which served 16 students. Students were required to complete an application and be approved by the school administration. The program was developed and sponsored by The Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated and the local Colorado Springs Iota Omicron Lambda Chapter. The "Go-to-High School, Go to College" program is designed for young men who want guidance, support, and skills to achieve success; are interested in developing leadership skills; are or will be actively pursuing college/ and or career options; and want or need additional encouragement in pursuit of higher learning. In addition to high school and college preparedness, topics included life skills, financial literacy, and personal growth. This program has not yet been formally evaluated, though growth in participation from Year One (four students) to Year Two (sixteen students) is promising.

In order to have the greatest impact on the success of the students and families, schools should conduct a needs assessment. Once the needs of students, families, community, and staff are determined, school leaders should make outreach to viable and vetted community organizations who can provide the necessary services.



Family Well-Being Summit

Boulder Valley School District

Submitted by Ari Gerzon Kessler, ari.gerzon-kessler@bvsd.org

The Instituto para el Fortalecimiento Familiar (IFF) Collaborative serves as a leading prevention and family well-being resource for Spanish-speaking parents and caregivers in Boulder County. IFF, co-founded by BVSD and Boulder County in 2022, aims to create a collaborative platform for diverse partners, enhancing their ability to connect with and support Latino families.

In April 2025, IFF held the Cumbre del Bienestar Familiar for BVSD parents as a response to parental stress being deemed a critical health issue by the Surgeon General. IFF wanted to support families by promoting wellness and stress reduction using SAMHSA's 8 Dimensions of Wellness. The goal was to create a space for parents and caregivers to learn about their wellness and how that translates into family connectedness and relationships.



The event took place on a Saturday, April 12th at New Vista High School in Boulder from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and was designed to support Spanish-speaking families through a culturally responsive wellness summit. It featured two inspiring keynote speakers—Jorge Chavez and Dr. Perla Delgado—who shared insights on family well-being and equity in education. Nine unique workshops were offered by community partners from the IFF coalition, aligned with SAMHSA's 8 Dimensions of Wellness, including emotional, occupational, intellectual, environmental, financial, physical, social, and spiritual well-being. Twenty agencies participated by hosting

tables in the resource fair and/or by leading workshops, while attendees also had access to holistic care like acudetox and Reiki in a designated wellness room. Breakfast and lunch were provided to create space for informal networking and peer support.

The Cumbre was evaluated by self-reported surveys completed by the 100+ parents and caregivers who attended. Utilizing a four point rating scale and free response questions, individuals were asked to assess parts of the event and individual workshops based on engagement, clarity, learning, changes/feedback they had, and overall application to their families and lives. On average, the workshops collectively scored a 3.86/4, while the event itself scored a 3.81/4.

At the end of the Cumbre event, parents and caregivers also participated in a Mentimeter to reflect on their day and what they learned. By the end of the event, 93% of parents and caregivers felt they understood the 8 Dimensions of Wellness, as opposed to 66% prior to the event. Additionally, participants noted the event made them feel “happy”, “relaxed”, “connected to community”, “hopeful”, and much more. “I feel empowered to pass the knowledge to other families and to talk about how good the event was,” one participant noted.

Harmonizing Community and Education: Englewood Schools/K4CO Radio Partnership

Englewood Schools

Submitted by Clarice Fortunato, clarice_fortunato@engschools.net

The overarching goal between Englewood Schools and K4CO Radio was to build and strengthen the community partnership that directly supports the schools, their students, and particularly the thriving music programs. As the musical programs continue to grow, a need has emerged for resources like musical instruments for students. Recognizing this, Englewood Schools embarked on a unique collaboration with K4CO Radio to not only increase awareness about the district's music initiatives and their needs but also to promote a targeted musical instrument donation drive. Beyond instrument acquisition, a significant objective was to provide the high school students enrolled in digital audio recording studio classes with an invaluable opportunity: to have their original music, created in the classroom, played live on air, offering them a taste of real-world broadcasting.

The district's Family, School, and Community Liaison played an important role, establishing a crucial relationship with K4CO Radio. This partnership enabled Englewood to secure a grant from the City of Englewood, specifically for radio airtime to promote the musical instrument drive. Music teachers from across the district were instrumental, providing detailed lists of their programs' needs, guiding the public on how best to support the students. To further amplify the message, the band teacher from Englewood High School and the district's Family, School, and Community Liaison appeared on K4CO Radio and the television program "Great Day Colorado" alongside K4CO representatives, promoting the district's music programs and highlighting their specific needs. In addition, the music teacher at Colorado's Finest High School of Choice, the alternative high school, worked with his digital audio recording class to create music files for on-air play of their own music. These students also participated in live interviews, discussing the music they produced on their school campus, which was then broadcast live.



This relationship, initiated when K4CO Radio personnel reached out to the Family, School, and Community Liaison through the Englewood Chamber of Commerce, proved profoundly impactful. The vital backing of the City of Englewood grant, K4CO, and Englewood Schools effectively promoted the instrument drive across radio and television platforms. This provided invaluable real-world experience for students interested in the arts, significantly engaged students who might rely on their music classes to stay connected with school, and allowed them to showcase their talents to a broad audience.

The program's success was evaluated through both qualitative and quantitative measures. Staff gathered direct feedback from teachers and students. Quantitatively, they tracked the success of the instrument

donation drive, measuring how many instruments they were able to acquire and distribute. Overall, an impressive total of 19 instruments, ranging from guitars to pianos, were successfully donated. However, implementation was not without its challenges. Logistical hurdles arose in coordinating student and staff appearances on the radio and for filming, necessitating careful collection of permission slips and meticulous scheduling to align both the radio station's broadcast times with student and teacher availability. Another significant challenge on the musical instrument donation drive side was the logistics of transporting and distributing the donated instruments to the various schools efficiently.

For anyone considering replicating this practice, the advice is to look actively within your own community for potential partners. You'll often discover numerous individuals and organizations eager to support students, particularly those with a genuine passion for various topics.

Health Fair

North Conejos School District

Submitted by Jessica Shawcroft, jesshawcroft24@northconejos.com

At North Conejos School District, the Health and Wellness Committee is composed of four school counselors, two nurses, and the food services director. In planning the Health Fair, the goal was to expose students to community resources for health and wellness practices in a rural community that at times has limited access to resources. North Conejos' Healthy Kids survey results from last year indicated that students wanted to improve the culture of North Conejos schools, have more student involvement in planning activities, and increase overall student health. The Health and Wellness Committee focused on these specific areas of student well-being to implement activities and practices that benefit all students in the district.

The Health and Wellness Committee met monthly. They discussed the idea of the Health Fair in December and set the date for April so there was time to plan and make outreach to community organizations. The April date provided an opportunity to take a break from CMAS testing and also allow students to prepare for testing with new ways to physically and mentally take care of themselves. One of the committee members reached out to an Alamosa County employee who helped find organizations to include in the Health Fair.



The Health Fair took place on April 7, 2025 at Centauri High School. Fifteen community organizations and two high school wellness clubs voluntarily participated. The representatives from each organization provided interactive education on topics such as nutrition, substance use, exercise, mental health, safe driving, self-care, holistic healing, healthy decision making, and emergency health response. Students received a 'Bingo card' which they took around while visiting the booths, and got signatures to fill the health categories on their card. The goal of this activity was to motivate students to visit booths and have an educational discussion, with an incentive if they did. Students who got a 'Bingo' received a stress ball, while students who filled the entire bingo sheet got their names entered into a drawing for additional prizes. Providing this Health Fair for students is directly linked to building positive school culture because it reminds students that there is support within school and outside of school for the health or wellness challenges they are facing. There are often barriers for North Conejos students when it comes to access to health or wellness resources, and the Health Fair was able to relieve some of those.

Each attendee received an electronic evaluation form. Every participant who filled out the evaluation would be interested in coming to future events, and felt that it was a well-organized event. Some challenges that staff encountered included students arriving before all presenters were fully set up. Additionally, some presenters felt that students could have used more time at booths.

Community organizations are eager to get involved with the school. Ask around for who is interested in helping and look for resources already in the community that meet students' needs. Additionally, allow ample time to prepare.

Hero's Pantry

Red Hawk Ridge Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Leqisha Olivas, lolivas@cherrycreekschools.org

At Red Hawk Ridge Elementary School in Cherry Creek School District, the primary focus is on the well-being of students. One significant factor contributing to this is food. Food insecurity can adversely affect children's social skills, concentration, and overall learning. Understanding this, staff established a food pantry for those in need. This initiative could alleviate stress, enhance attendance, and boost performance. To assess the necessity of a food pantry, staff distributed a survey to identify who might benefit from food bags. The response included 87 children's names, reinforcing a belief that a food pantry would be advantageous for the community.

Initially, the Community Liaison partnered with the Principal to identify a suitable space for Hero's Pantry. The next step involved gathering food and assembling a small team to set it up. They recognized the importance of key staples such as beans, rice, pasta, lentils, and oats, which they obtained through a community food donation drive. Eastern Hills Community Church also donated to the cause. After receiving the food, they focused on stocking the Pantry and creating labels.



Once the Pantry was set up, it was time to invite the community. Staff communicated the new resource through invitations and website postings. After opening, a couple of families came and used the pantry. Later, parents offered feedback that they did not have transportation. This led to a new strategy of packing bags and delivering them to families. Currently, most family members who use the pantry have the food delivered to their homes. Many families commented about how convenient it was to have a pantry at their child's school. They could shop before or after school with or without their child. It was incredible to see how excited students were to be able to shop in the pantry.

Hero's Pantry's influence extends beyond the students it serves directly. Parents, teachers, and local organizations frequently collaborate to stock the pantry. Initiating Hero's Pantry was about storage and fostering peace of mind, resilience, and community. With careful planning and incremental steps, anyone can establish a pantry that offers security, nourishment, and sustainability.

Holiday Help

Ponderosa Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Yuridia Andres, yandres@cherrycreekschools.org

At Ponderosa Elementary School in Cherry Creek School District, Holiday Help is a meaningful annual tradition that unifies the multifaceted community. This tradition is an opportunity to get together and support families within the community. The goal is to create pathways for support that don't rely on families initiating contact.

A retired staff member-turned-volunteer put together a form for families to fill out. The form asked for basic information such as the students' age, grade, favorite color, clothing sizes, and a few preferred gift items—excluding high-cost electronics or gaming systems—to help plan for realistic and meaningful gift support. Though this support is intended for students K-5, younger siblings are also included. The Community Liaison supported by separating out forms and delivering all the forms to the teachers. From there, teachers passed them out to the students, allowing staff members the choice of which families to support. They were handed out in early October with a due date of the end of October, giving ample time to sort, organize, and begin networking.



Members of the community, whether it be Ponderosa staff, those within the Cherry Creek School District, and friends and coworkers of staff members, felt connected to Ponderosa by supporting families. It's a deeply unifying experience to help support families who may not have been able to give their children the holiday season they had hoped for. These relationships create a welcoming, affirming school environment where every member of the community feels valued.

One of the challenges was the overwhelming quantity of requests for support. Ensuring all families were supported required a very intentional system to protect the privacy of families and ensure families received their gifts. At the end, ensuring the space was organized and that there was a protocol for the families to pick up their gifts was a challenge. Also, ensuring families came in to pick up their gifts before winter break became a challenge.

For others wanting to create a Holiday Help project, having a team that can network outside of the school is very important. Plan clear systems that protect families' privacy but also ensure clear protocols for all phases of the project that include making forms, collecting forms, gift collection, and gift distribution. The Community Liaison used the translation tool Talking Points to remind families that forms were due and made personal contact with families when the volunteer was unable to reach them. Start to finish, this project can seem never-ending, but the reward is unmeasurable.

Illuminating Rural STEM Education Through Dark Sky Community Engagement

Moffat PK-12 School, Moffat Consolidated School District #2

Submitted by Sarah Deleon, sdeleon@moffatschools.org

The Moffat PK-12 school is in a unique geographic location within a recognized Dark Sky area. This rural school district serves a geographically isolated community where students often have limited exposure to hands-on STEM experiences and career pathways. By celebrating the area's dark sky resources, the practice fostered location-based pride while connecting students to learning opportunities and partnerships that demonstrate the value of their rural environment.

The planning and implementation involved teachers, school administration, and new community partners. SLV Go, a local outdoor recreation stewardship organization, contributed expertise on dark sky pollution and conservation careers. Nomad Dome provided interactive astronomy technology and educational programming, while local astronomers offered scientific expertise. Leveraging community partnerships kept the total expenditure of the event under \$300.

The practice centered on a winter solstice community STEM event featuring multiple teacher-hosted activity centers. Nomad Dome's interactive sky mapping technology significantly expanded participation capacity and provided weather-resistant alternatives when it rained. Moffat PK-12 provided s'mores stations, propane-controlled fire pits, outdoor heaters, hot cocoa, and popcorn. The school's inflatable movie screen created a documentary viewing area for astronomy-themed content with bean bag seating. The Colorado State Office of Extension provided additional expertise and support. This event exposed students to careers in environmental science and astronomy while developing environmental stewardship awareness. It brought families together for shared learning and created community pride in the area's unique scientific resources.



Moffatt staff evaluated the practice through attendance, community feedback, and partnership sustainability. Weather challenges highlighted the importance of backup planning. Future evaluation will include pre- and post-surveys measuring student interest in STEM careers and environmental stewardship awareness. The primary challenge was coordinating multiple new partnerships while managing weather contingencies.

Rural schools should leverage unique geographic advantages and prioritize partnership development to create distinctive STEM experiences. Start planning early to establish meaningful community connections and always include weather contingencies. As one participating teacher noted, "The event showed our students that living in a rural area isn't a limitation—it's an incredible scientific resource that opens doors to amazing learning opportunities they can't find anywhere else."

Parent-Teacher Conferences: An Innovative Approach

Pathways Future Center School, Adams 12 Five Star Schools

Submitted by A'ndra Warren, andra.n.warren@adams12.org

Historically at Pathways Future Center School in Adams 12 Five Star Schools, few families attended the spring parent-teacher conferences. Recognizing that during fall conferences they host a family salsa contest and a financial aid workshop that bring in many families, staff decided to plan similar events during spring.

Planning the spring parent-teacher conferences was a school-wide effort with community partners. The Family Outreach Liaison was responsible for all communication and logistics with the community partners. The Counselor coordinated the financial aid workshop in collaboration with the Educational Opportunity Center. The Wraparound Facilitator oversaw the viewing of *Screenagers* and also supported, with grant money, the Electives Teacher and his students' art gallery. The Student & Family Outreach Program covered the cost of meals for the *Screenagers* viewers, while Chick-fil-A donated drinks. The Adams County Health Department hosted a resource table to support the event. Another community partner was Kiwanis, who brought their resource trailer. Food for Hope provided food bags for families to take home.

The main goal was to increase parents' attendance at conferences, but also to provide them access to resources. Teachers, counselors, and administrators were available without appointment. While waiting for their turn to meet with a teacher, families could visit the student gallery just outside the electives classroom, enjoy a *Screenagers* movie, and eat a Chick-fil-A dinner. The Health Department hosted a resource table to support the movie presentation. A representative from the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) helped families complete their FAFSA applications. Light refreshments were offered for families completing FAFSA. Either on their way in or at the end of the day, families "shopped" for free hygiene products, graciously donated by the Kiwanis Resource Trailer. Additionally, families were able to grab a Hope food bag on their way out.



School staff evaluated this practice using qualitative data around engagement with partners and among the community for the duration of the event. Many families followed up with the school in writing to thank them for the way they structured conferences. One of the parents said: "It was great that the food and resource trailer were there, it made it very convenient, helpful and quick to have those there while I was also meeting with the teacher. It allowed me to get helpful resources without taking additional time off work...The teachers and staff were also super friendly...I have really appreciated all the help that my son and my family have received from Pathways."



Partners in Education (PIE) Platform

Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Jim McKenney, Jim.McKenney@jeffco.k12.co.us

Jeffco Public Schools is setting a new standard for community and industry partnerships through the Jeffco Partners in Education (PIE) platform—an innovative partner and volunteer management system developed in collaboration with Relatrix- a Colorado based developer. Designed to support both Family, School, and Community Partnerships and Postsecondary Workforce Readiness, Jeffco PIE is transforming how schools connect with volunteers and external organizations to enhance student success.

Jeffco PIE serves as a central hub for managing school-based volunteering and partnerships districtwide, allowing schools to connect with vetted industry partners, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, community groups, and volunteers. It supports a wide range of engagement opportunities, from career-connected learning experiences like internships and job shadows to community-based support such as resource drives, mentoring, and after-school programming. Schools can easily post, manage, and share their requests to partners and opportunities for volunteers, eliminating the need for manual outreach or spreadsheets. Partners can also post and manage offers for schools to accept. To date, there are over 800 partners in Jeffco PIE. As schools build localized, relationship-driven networks through approaches such as [School Cafes](#), Jeffco PIE provides the structure, tracking, and sustainability to support that work long term.



One of the key features of Jeffco PIE is its integration with the Jeffco Career Links initiative, which provides a comprehensive resource for students, educators, industry partners, and families to access work-based learning opportunities. Through this integration, Jeffco PIE helps bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world career experiences. One of PIE's most powerful features is its built-in communication and outcome tracking tools. Schools and district teams can: send notices, newsletters, and event invitations directly to partners; track when school requests and partner offers are matched; and quantify volunteer hours, in-kind donations, and students or families supported, giving schools real-time insight into partnership impact.

While the platform has proven incredibly valuable, rollout hasn't been without challenges. Some schools initially questioned the need for a centralized system, especially if they already had informal relationships in place. The Division of Family and Community Partnerships and Postsecondary Workforce Readiness teams trained early adopter schools to help staff understand how Jeffco PIE actually reduces the burden of volunteer and partnership management.

For districts across Colorado, Jeffco PIE is a promising, replicable model—a strategic solution for organizing, growing, and sustaining partnerships that support students from kindergarten through career.



Partnerships for Community Room Resources

Summit Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Kristina Sandoval, ksandoval6@cherrycreekschools.org

Staff at Summit Elementary School in Cherry Creek School District recognize that the ongoing need for student and family support extends beyond academic performance. The goal of establishing partnerships between the surrounding community and Summit Elementary has allowed Summit's Community Room resources to meet those additional needs.



**SUMMIT
ELEMENTARY**

The planning and implementation of this work involved shared knowledge between the Community Liaisons within the district, a key staff member of Summit, and the Cherry Creek School District Homeless Liaison, along with her amazing team.

Summit Elementary successfully partnered with Eastern Hills Community Church to provide snacks for students and food boxes during the Thanksgiving holiday. They were also a constant support for supplying the pantry. The ARC Thrift Store consistently provided vouchers for the community closet and made it possible for families to shop as needed. Blessings in a Bag provided non-perishable food every week for students to take home for the weekend and the Homeless Liaison's team worked closely with another church who donated weekly grocery bags for families.

The community partnerships at Summit have been a blessing in supporting students' and families' needs. Funding was the greatest challenge to sustaining this practice.

Advice for someone to replicate this practice is to take time building relationships and connecting with the local community. Having partnerships in schools allows the community to come together in a shared vision for student success, creating a more supportive environment for students and families.

Personal Hygiene Kits

Meadow Point Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Emily Prascher, eprascher3@cherrycreekschools.org

As a Title I school, a number of students at Meadow Point Elementary School in Cherry Creek School District may lack access to the personal care items necessary for maintaining good hygiene. Meadow Point staff developed this practice to empower all students to practice self-care hygiene routines regardless of economic situations at home. The goal was to ensure that lessons about puberty and personal care were supported with practical resources.



The Administrative Health Liaison and the Community Liaison collaborated with 5th grade teachers to identify essential items for the hygiene kits. The Health Liaison then submitted a wellness grant through the Mental Health & Wellness Student Services department to secure funding for the hygiene kit materials. The Liaisons also worked with local businesses to get items donated where appropriate.

Each hygiene kit included a toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, deodorant wipes, personal cleaning wipes, lotion, lip balm, and a selection of organic cotton period products. The items were funded through grant support and/or donated by local businesses. The Administrative Health Liaison assembled the kits and distributed class sets to each 5th grade teacher. Teachers provided the kits to students during spring puberty lessons, directly aligning with the grade-level curriculum. This initiative gave students tangible support to reinforce health education and ensured all students had access to necessary personal care products.

While students appeared grateful and excited to receive the kits, no formal evaluation process took place. A challenge identified was the difficulty of evaluating the impact, as students are often reluctant to discuss personal hygiene needs or respond to surveys on the topic. Timing also posed a challenge; while kits were provided during a scheduled health lesson, individual needs vary. Some students may have required these resources earlier and could obtain them through the school clinic or Community Liaison, while others may not need them until later. Despite this, the project was low-cost and simple to implement. For future implementation, including a small note with contact information for obtaining additional or replacement items—or donating unused kits—may be beneficial.

To replicate this practice, coordination with teaching staff is essential to identify where tangible supports can enhance the curriculum. Partnering with local businesses and district-level initiatives can help secure funding or donations. Providing kits to all students, rather than targeting based on need, ensured dignity and normalized conversations around personal hygiene. As one staff member remarked, “It was important that no student felt singled out—everyone deserves to feel prepared and supported.”

Play. Lead. Belong.

PEAK Learning Center, Adams 12 Five Star Schools

Submitted by Stephanie Hansen, stephanie.hansen@adams12.org

The PEAK program is a long-standing afterschool and summer learning initiative that provides academic support, enrichment activities, and a safe, engaging environment for students in Adams 12 Five Star Schools. Originally launched during the summer to support students experiencing homelessness, the PEAK Soccer Initiative was expanded to all 10 PEAK Learning Center sites in Adams 12 Five Star Schools. The goal of the PEAK Soccer Initiative is to increase access and opportunity for students in grades 3–5 to participate in organized sports. Planning and implementation involved a multi-agency collaboration with the Executive Director of Balòn USA, Extended Learning Manager for Adams 12, Recreation Superintendent for the City of Thornton, and PEAK Site Directors.



Soccer practices were held twice weekly for eight weeks during PEAK programming in fall and spring. Coaches hired and trained by Balòn USA delivered co-ed, developmental instruction focused on exercise, fun, and positive habits in a non-competitive environment. Games occurred on Saturdays at local parks. The City of Thornton provided fields and equipment. All students received jerseys and shin guards, and PEAK staff—along with classroom teachers and school administrators—regularly attended and supported the program. Staff used a QR code to track family attendance at each game. Extension activities included distributing soccer-themed books and math games to reinforce learning. A banquet concluded each season, recognizing players, families, and staff. By embedding soccer in PEAK, the program removed barriers like cost and transportation and supported consistent participation. Participation has shown a positive effect on school-day attendance, particularly for students experiencing high mobility.

PEAK staff collected family feedback via exit tickets, and students shared reflections through surveys and creative expressions like artwork. Balòn USA compiled and shared annual impact reports that include data on participation, engagement, and outcomes. A primary challenge has been managing high levels of interest that exceed the program's current capacity.

For those interested in replicating the PEAK Soccer Initiative, collaborative planning and consistent communication are essential. Prior to each season, district staff facilitate planning meetings with all partners. Shared planning documents centralize schedules, contact lists, and other logistics. Regular check-ins help address challenges such as staffing shortages or student conduct. Multiple funding sources are crucial for sustainability. Systems that ensure mission alignment and continuous improvement make it possible to expand thoughtfully.

Read Fur Fun

Mission Viejo Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Sandra Zimmerman, Szimmerman4@cherrycreekschools.org

The goal of the Read Fur Fun program at Mission Viejo Elementary School in the Cherry Creek School District was to give students a chance to practice reading in a safe, supportive environment alongside a calm, friendly service dog. Reading to a dog can help children feel more relaxed and confident, since dogs are non-judgmental and naturally comforting. With a parent present during each session, the program also encouraged meaningful family time centered around reading. Overall, the aim was to create a positive and joyful experience with books, helping kids see reading as something fun and worth looking forward to. In addition to hosting the service dogs, staff were able to incorporate robotic companion pets that were received as part of a grant. This allowed the children to always have a ‘pet’ with them while reading.



Mission Viejo’s School Librarian partnered with Canine Partners of the Rockies (CPOTR), a local service dog organization that trains service dogs to be placed with disabled Coloradans, to facilitate the practice. Sessions were intentionally small, as this was the first time running the program, and the goal was to ensure a calm, manageable environment. Each session included three service dogs, and each family was able to take turns reading with them. Attendance ranged from three to eight families per session; one parent typically brings one or two children. Each session also included two to three dog handlers, the executive director of CPOTR, and School Librarian.

The School Librarian evaluated the initiative by observing interaction between families and the service dogs, as well as gathering verbal feedback at the end of each session. There were plenty of smiles and giggles, along with focused, extended periods of reading aloud. The families expressed their appreciation with comments like, "This was so great," and "Thank you so much for arranging this." Three families chose to participate more than once, and one parent was so inspired by the experience that she purchased a robotic companion pet for her son to use at home - she later shared that he reads to it every day.

The greatest challenge was getting the word out about the program. The registration link and program details were included in a monthly newsletter to families, which tends to have a lot of information. Read Fur Fun may have gotten lost in the shuffle, as attendance was lower than expected. Next school year, the plan is to explore ways to promote the program more prominently or separately to ensure it reaches more families.

Advice to anyone who plans to implement this program is to begin small. Find a local service dog organization with a passion for community service. Advertise the program through flyers, announcements, and bulletin boards with program information.

Ring of Fire

Stevens Elementary School, Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Katie Mauro, kmauro@jeffcoschools.us

Stevens Elementary School in Jeffco Public Schools has forged a meaningful relationship with the Kiwanis Club of Wheat Ridge. Together, they champion the development of high-quality work by students, a cornerstone of the three dimensions of student achievement embraced at Stevens Elementary (Mastery of Knowledge and Skills, Character, and High-Quality Work.). Their collaborative spirit culminates in a school-wide event known as the “Ring of Fire,” a special event held three times a year that highlights students’ commitment to producing high-quality work.

The principal collects the High Quality Work from the classroom teachers and the Family Engagement Liaison partners with the Kiwanis to arrange the event details. This special occasion provides a platform for nominated students to proudly showcase their exemplary work, articulate the often-challenging yet crucial process of revisions they undertook, and share the valuable feedback that shaped their creations. The entire student body, along with enthusiastic members of the wider community, gathered to celebrate these dedicated young scholars. The Kiwanis Club of Wheat Ridge has proven to be an exceptional and dedicated partner. Their generous contributions included providing special certificates of achievement, along with exciting goodie bags for each student nominated for the prestigious Ring of Fire. Furthermore, members of the Kiwanis Club were always present at the celebration, offering enthusiastic cheers and unwavering encouragement to the Stevens scholars.

During the “Ring of Fire,” students engaged in thoughtful reflection on the various stages of their academic journey, from initial drafts and the incorporation of constructive feedback to the critical steps of checking for deep understanding and meticulously refining their work. By openly discussing this process in front of the entire school community, the event powerfully underscored the significance and value of the high-quality work process for all students at Stevens Elementary.

The most important recommendation to replicate this practice is to meet with the students prior to the event to discuss their learning and the process they went through to get to high quality work.



For more information and
partnering materials:

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www.cde.state.co.us/sacpie

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cde.state.co.us/familyengagement

Questions

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