

# Parent Academy District 49 – Sand Creek Zone Colorado Springs, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education



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

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

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

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

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