

Who-Ville Winter Celebration

Little Elementary School

Arvada, CO



Knowing that the holiday season is not always a time of joy and cheer for everyone, staff at Little Elementary School worked purposefully to create a special event for our families before winter break. Teachers and staff united in an effort to ensure that all students have gifts and food, and many community partners linked arms with us to make this possible. Churches, food pantries, local stores, and business owners all played an important part and we were able to create a magical evening in Who-Ville with the Who's and of course, the Grinch!

Volunteers from a local church spent many hours painting and decorating props, and totally transformed the gymnasium with lights, trees and painted Who-Ville houses. The stage was set up for a musical performance with hand bells by our fifth grade class, and it was even more appealing in colorful costumes and some very unusual hairstyles! The Grinch showed up unexpectedly (to the delight of the kids), and got up to all kinds of mischief before settling down in the photo booth area for pictures with families. In the cafeteria, families gathered for food and cotton candy, and were invited to the cookie decorating table. The church volunteers did a wonderful job serving food and also engaging with students and families working at craft and game tables. Not only were staff grateful for their time, but also for the help they offered to families by providing much needed gifts and food baskets for the Holiday Season.

Many families dressed up like adorable Who-Ville characters. One of the stations everyone really enjoyed was the Hair Salon, where attendees got a hair make-over and walked away with lots of hairspray, ribbons and color. Another family favorite was the cultural table that displayed different seasonal holiday celebrations all over the world. Little's Jewish families created posters highlighting Hanukkah, displaying the Menorah and demonstrating the traditional game that is played with a dreidel. Providing interactive experiences were important to Little Elementary staff, and family engagement was the goal. Seeing students explore and ask questions about other cultures added an additional dimension of learning.

During the event, there was a sense of community in the building as families connected with each other and enjoyed informal conversations with the teachers and staff. Staff welcomed families as they entered the school and were greeted at the door with a little gift at the end of the evening. The goal was to make everyone feel welcome and included, and the many smiles staff saw that night confirmed that the Winter Celebration is really worth repeating every year!

Little Elementary's Family Engagement Liaison states: "The secret to success in planning a many-faceted event is collaboration with community partners such as churches, local food pantries and other community groups with an interest in volunteering. Early planning is vital and so is constant communication and collaboration with staff, teachers, and everyone on the planning committee. It is exciting to see such enthusiasm as the school and families work together towards a common goal."