

Parr Power Hour

Parr Elementary School

Arvada, CO



Staff at Parr Elementary School wanted to move past the idea of family engagement consisting of singular events and instead create practices that truly facilitate equal partnerships with every family. As a result, the school began hosting monthly coffee meetings for families that focus on what is going on in the classroom, and how parents can support their students' academic success.



Parr's Family Engagement Liaison, English as a Second Language Teacher, and Instructional Coach are involved in the planning of the family coffee meetings. The group has bi-weekly meetings to discuss the content and details of each coffee meeting. Various staff present at the meetings, based on the topic.

The coffee meetings occur on the third Wednesday of every month. In the first coffee meeting, families received an overview of what each grade level was working on in regards to literacy development. The sequential meetings focused on social-emotional learning (strategies for when children get frustrated while reading), assisting students with math strategies at home, and finding ways for families to have a voice at school. The coffee meetings are directly linked to student academic success, as it has been proven that there is a positive link between family engagement and children's math and literacy skills (Epstein, et al. 2013).

After each coffee meeting, staff ask families to write down suggestions for future topics and suggestions for improvement. The planning committee also meets after each meeting to debrief about what went well, what feedback they received, and how they can improve for the next meetings.

Not surprisingly, Parr's staff did experience some challenges during the planning and implementation process, particularly around gathering family input about the meetings. They are hoping that in the future they can give families more control of the planning of the meetings, so that the meetings can really serve what families need and want.

Parr's family engagement liaison states: "To anyone who would like to implement this practice, it is important to make the planning a collaborative effort. It is helpful to have input from all stakeholders, including teachers, administration, families, and other school staff. It is also important to give the meetings a focused goal based on your larger school goals. That will guide your planning and implementation, and it will make it easier to articulate the importance of the monthly meetings."

