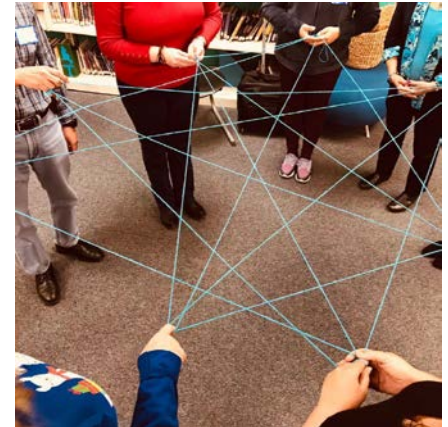


Removing real or perceived barriers for culturally and linguistically diverse families by building strong partnerships with two-way communication has proven to increase family engagement for Douglas County School District (DCSD). Following analysis of past family engagement efforts, staff realized that DCSD practices were aimed at sharing information with families and eliciting feedback instead of offering opportunities in which parents had a voice and created a common goal together. Leveraging the relationships built by two bilingual cultural and family liaisons provided an opportunity to bring families together.



To begin a plan for removing barriers to multilingual parent engagement, DCSD, in partnership with Patsy Roybal, Consultant with Families for Excellence in Education, engaged in a series of workshops, conversations, and goal-setting sessions. In close partnership with Roybal, a series of five workshops were created and offered in a bilingual setting. A local church that many of our families attend offered space to hold the workshops. Each workshop included opportunities for parent input, feedback, and experiential learning.

The first workshop outlined the research that links academic achievement to student success. In the second workshop, parents learned about the school system, including the leadership structure, district accountability committee, and the school accountability committees. Workshop three focused on academic standards, analyzing school performance frameworks, and assessments such as CMAS and ACCESS. Workshop four built upon families' desire to have their voices heard, so they practiced public speaking skills and built confidence. The final session celebrated graduates of the workshops with a certificate and cake.

## Connection

Parents growing together with their children

### PURPOSE:

1. TO BE THE VOICE OF BILINGUAL PARENTS
2. TO HAVE REPRESENTATION WHEN MAKING DECISIONS
3. TO HELP PARENTS GET INVOLVED IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
4. TO PROMOTE THE INCLUSION OF BILINGUAL PARENTS BY HELPING THEM TO OVERCOME FEAR AND REMOVE REAL OR PERCEIVED BARRIERS THAT MAY EXIST.

Following the initial five workshops, some families received additional support from Roybal to become trainers themselves. These families met to plan their next steps, choose a name for their newly formed parent advocacy group, and defined their mission. A series of facilitated discussions resulted in a name, clear mission, and vision for the group. This was an organic process that united families with a common purpose and firmly rooted them in the work.

Before the parents could facilitate the workshops for other families, the COVID-19 pandemic closed the meeting spaces. Conexión continued to meet via Zoom and invited families to join for Q and A sessions offered by the parents. Conexión is in the process of planning how they might offer mini sessions of the workshops via Zoom next school year until in-person training is allowed by the local government. Conexión is also hoping to offer Facebook live streaming events to engage more parents.