

Dad's Learning Community

Elkhart Elementary School

Aurora, CO



The Dad's Learning Community is a family partnership program created from Aurora Public Schools' (APS) strategic plan. APS' strategic plan was developed in collaboration with the Aurora community, to support the district VISION of every student having the plans, skills, and credentials to shape their successful futures.

Ronald Schumacher has been the principal of Elkhart Elementary School for ten years. During that time, he has been actively building relationships and partnerships with parents and families in the community. Elkhart is not only linguistically diverse; it is also home to students from many countries around the world. Mr. Schumacher implemented the Dad's Learning Community program to engage fathers in the school and in their students' learning. The event also helps build trusting relationships between home and school.



The breakfast is hosted twice a year. It is amazing to observe the fathers walking into the building and sharing with the principal their questions, concerns, and suggestions that go beyond homework. Their questions, concerns, and suggestions have ranged from information on their student's Individual Education Plans, Diversity Learning Center academics and scoring, International Baccalaureate curriculum and outcomes, how new second language learners are educated, input on school projects and budgets, impact of district and state policies on education, and much more.

The implementation of the Dad's Learning Community requires a lot of planning, such as setting a good time of year (weather and work season are key factors), time of the day (early morning, right after school starts, middle of the day, evening time, etc.), formal printed invitations in the language of the parents, face to face invitations with a clear message of the relevance of their participation, personal phone calls (gentle reminders), male interpreters in the needed languages, a welcoming room, and snacks that all attendees can enjoy during the conversation.



Other considerations when planning the Dad's Learning Community agenda and topics are sensitivity to cultural norms, clear and effective goals for the meeting, a personal invite from the principal before sending invitations, and promotion of the event at other parent activities and meetings.

The Dad's Learning Community is an outstanding family partnership program that promotes an environment of trust and respect. Elkhart's diversity of students, families, and voices is an asset that is supporting every student shaping a successful future.