

Firebird Families

Secrest Elementary School

Arvada, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Secrest Elementary decided to implement Firebird Families with a goal to drive parent engagement, foster community development, and empower families to become advocates for their children. Firebird Families was designed not to replace, but to supplement, other parent engagement strategies. To become equal partners, Secrest staff found it necessary to foster partnerships.

Firebird Families is a school-wide collaboration. Each classroom had at least two families, recommended by teachers or self-volunteered, who would stand-in as “classroom parents” for that particular room. Their primary role was to serve as information nodes through which other families and the teacher could interact. Questions about homework, field trips, classroom activities, policies, or procedures could be pushed from teacher to families and vice versa. The Firebird Families could also help network the families in the classroom, giving all families a voice and an advocate for their individual room.



To launch this program, the school hosted an event in January to introduce families to their Firebird Family representative. Donations were solicited for coffee and donuts, while stations were set up outside the different classrooms in the morning. Representatives distributed the treats to families as they dropped their children off at school, affording them the chance to personally greet and interact with other families in their classroom.

Firebird Families is a program that evolved based on school data. Secrest’s family engagement liaison explains: “We were determined to implement this program after analyzing the results of parent survey data and reviewing qualitative information about the struggles our families encountered. Parents expressed that they had difficulties assisting their children with homework. Was there a way to foster the growth of community while alleviating these concerns?”

The program’s success is evaluated with both qualitative and quantitative data. The school’s family liaison reviews beginning and end of year surveys and conducts intermittent listening sessions and check-ins.

Standard 5--Sharing Power