

Family Wellness Engagement Specialist

Thompson School District

Longmont, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

During the 2016-2017 school year, Thompson School District hired a part-time Family Wellness Engagement Specialist (FWES). This position was funded to:

- Assist in the development of strong family, school and community partnerships.
- Increase family awareness of local health services and learning opportunities.
- Increase family involvement in school wellness initiatives.
- Support the connections between family health, parent engagement, student academic performance and student attendance and behavior.

The FWES was tasked with focusing on Title I elementary schools and developing both universal and targeted strategies based on school needs. The universal strategies included development of monthly Family Wellness Newsletters and School Wellness Newsletters. The Family Wellness Newsletter provided basic health and wellness information, learning opportunities in the community, and events such as 5k's, community block parties, nature walks and much more.

The School Wellness Newsletter provided staff with tips for promoting health and wellness in their schools as well as professional development opportunities. Other universal approaches included creating wellness bulletin boards in three of the Title I elementary schools with seasonal health themes, and providing wellness resources at Back to School events and Family Nights.

Targeted strategies varied by school and included working with a community partner to host *Cooking Matters for Families*, a 6-week course designed to support families in making healthy and affordable nutrition choices. Other targeted strategies included increasing parent engagement and sustainability at a school-based community garden, implementing activity based homework for Every Kid Healthy Week, providing education and assistance to a PTO in developing their first before-school smoothie club, and assisting with several wellness-related family events at the end of the school year.

A significant challenge with this position was limited time to fully develop programming at Title I schools. Currently, the position has been funded at 50%, and may be most useful if focused on just one or two priority schools. This could lead to stronger relationships with school staff and families to determine needs and create strategic plans to address current health and wellness issues.

Although this was a new position, it has provided valuable communication between staff and families, and expanded the collaboration between community partners and schools to support student success and family health and wellness.