

# Family Science Night

## Hackberry Hill Elementary School, Jeffco Public Schools

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With a changing school demographic due to school closures in the area over the past several years, adding more school-wide events at Hackberry Hill Elementary School in Jeffco allows families the opportunity to build stronger family-school relationships. Family Science Night is tied to one of the school's UIP goals—to *increase the positive culture of belonging*. The goal of the event was to foster scientific curiosity and exploration by engaging elementary students and their families in hands-on STEM activities while collaborating with community partners.



PTA volunteers, the Family Engagement Liaison, and the Digital Teacher-Librarian (DTL) collaboratively planned the event to transform what was formerly the Science Fair into a more inclusive and family-friendly event. A parent volunteer secured diverse community partners to lead hands-on experiments and demonstrations. The DTL and Family Engagement Liaison also organized a group of students to showcase engaging activities in the school's STEAM lab.

Family Science Night was an evening of discovery and fun for all elementary students and their families. Hosting the event on a weeknight ensured greater participation, as did free dinner, courtesy of the school's PTA.

Several community partners helped make the event a success. The Jefferson County Public Library brought programmable robots, Creighton University students offered take-home slime experiments, a North Arvada Middle School teacher led paper rocket projects, and Hackberry Hill alumni facilitated seed planting. The required fifth-grade science projects, alongside optional projects from K-4th grade students, were proudly showcased and rigorously judged by college students from Metro State University, adding an exciting layer of academic engagement. The collaborative environment ignited scientific curiosity and demonstrated real-world applications of STEM, inspiring continued learning and reinforcing that education is a shared community effort.

Anecdotal feedback from staff, families, and students indicate that Family Science Night was a huge success. Next year, school staff plan to have more precise data to inform areas of improvement and compare outcomes in subsequent years. Family Science Night is an easy event to replicate and reminds families of the many community partners in their area that can offer valuable learning experiences outside of the school building.