

Expanding Family Leadership at DPS

Denver Public Schools

Submitted by Jasmine Rigby, jasmine_rigby@dpsk12.net

During the 2024–25 school year, DPS Family and Community Engagement (FACE) significantly expanded their Family Leadership program opportunities. In previous years, FACE offered around five in-person programs along with monthly FACE University webinars. This year, they made a deliberate effort to remove barriers—particularly around language and accessibility—and to increase opportunities for families to engage in meaningful, personalized ways.

FACE hosted 17 different Parent Leadership Programs, with an impressive total of 255 families participating across English, Spanish, and Vietnamese sessions. This expansion was led by an incredible team of the Lead Family Empowerment + Title I Specialist, Title I Specialist, and Asian Family Engagement Specialist. They collaborated closely with school-site leaders, providing training and coaching to support successful program implementation. Their work was further supported by generous donors who contributed food and giveaways, committed school leadership teams, and a grant from Highly Capable Kids.

To improve accessibility, many programs were offered virtually, with both morning and afternoon options. They recommended programs based on staff availability and capacity to ensure consistent follow-through. DPS currently offers four key family leadership programs: Highly Capable Kids, Parenting Partners, Family Advocacy, Calm and Kind Family, and Family Meals. Title I funds helped provide extra-duty pay for school-site leaders.

The impact of these programs is evident. 100% of families reported they would recommend the program they attended; 75% expressed a willingness to help their school recruit for future sessions; 85% indicated a desire to volunteer more in their child's school; and 12 parents stepped up to take leadership roles in facilitating future programs!



FACE used pre- and post-surveys and made real-time adjustments to new programs using session-based evaluations. One ongoing challenge was school-site facilitator retention. While recruitment can be demanding, those who successfully launched a program often found renewed motivation thanks to the positive family feedback and increased parent engagement.

For districts launching similar programs, supporting facilitators is critical. FACE created detailed outreach plans—including call scripts, multilingual email templates, flyers, and RSVP forms. Donated or parent-provided snacks and giveaways further helped build a welcoming atmosphere. Attending sessions, taking photos, and offering support onsite were key. For educators, the message is clear: meet families where they are. Consider their schedules, offer hybrid options when possible, and don't hesitate to send frequent reminders.