

Redesigned School-Family Conferences

Montview Elementary School, Aurora Public Schools

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Before becoming a [community school](#) in the 2023-2024 school year, Montview Elementary School, located in Aurora, had minimal parent involvement. With ‘powerful student and family engagement’ being one of the six key practices of a community school, Montview sought to transform their traditional parent-teacher conferences into an experience that was more inclusive, collaborative, and meaningful. The Assistant Principal (AP) and Community Schools Coordinator (CSC) collaborated on and planned this initiative in the summer of 2023. That same team, in addition to parents, revised the practice slightly in the summer of 2024.

The AP and CSC designed a 30-minute structured conference that included getting background on the parent's school experiences, what they hoped for their child this school year, and what support they needed to help at



home. They also added two goals that parents, teachers, and students made together in the conference: an SEL goal and an attendance goal. Literacy and math goals were also shared, including examples of how teachers will support students in meeting this goal. Conferences ended with sharing what parents and students are most excited for this year, and any worries or concerns they have. In the spring conferences, parents and students reflected on their favorite memories of the year, and what resources they might need for summer.

Montview leadership allocated funding to provide subs during the school day to allow teachers time for the conferences. Funds were also used to purchase flashcards, workbooks, fiction and nonfiction books in English and Spanish, pencils, and crayons to give away during conferences. Finally, snacks were provided to parents when they arrived. There was also a selfie station where parents could take pictures with their children.

Montview leadership sent surveys to parents for feedback on what worked well and what might be changed to make the experience even more meaningful. Leadership shared this feedback with teachers to ensure parent requests were included in future conferences. Outcomes included increased attendance, increased family partnerships, and increased achievement across the school, as measured by both district and state assessments.

As with any new initiative, some staff buy-in varied. Some were more hesitant to release control from teacher to parent and were slower to embrace this collaborative approach. Leadership worked to celebrate those teachers implementing with fidelity and achieving strong results.

Recommendations include having a clear, structured agenda and template for teachers to use. Record one or two examples to watch and discuss with teachers as they prepare for conferences. Observe as many conferences as possible to give teachers feedback, and model techniques.