



Student Voice in Family Engagement

Sand Creek High School, School District 49

Submitted by Amy Sanchez-Martinez, amy.sanchezmartinez@d49.org

At Sand Creek High School in Colorado Springs, the goal of Student Voice in Family Engagement was to build the capacity of young adults to drive their family's engagement in ways that work for each of them rather than expecting all families to adjust to one manner of engagement and partnership with the school.

To accomplish this, the principal at Sand Creek High School used three empathy interview questions to structure preliminary conversations with twelve students on a principal's advisory taskforce: 1) What do you like about our school? 2) What would make this school a better place for you? and 3) How would you like our staff and your family to work together to best support you? The student taskforce then led small groups of a cross-section of 10% of the total student population to learn about what they need to engage their families in their education. Immediately following these small groups, the student taskforce analyzed what their peers wrote and discussed to provide recommendations to the school for family engagement in the subsequent school year. At the end of this analysis, students requested to rename themselves the "Student Voice Board" and recommended that the school provide families with quick resources to better understand graduation/on-track expectations by grade level as well as recommendations to understand students as people.

As a result, the school designed [On Track and Brain Development Cards](#) in English and Spanish that were the focus of Back to School Night and made available in all school offices. In addition, students learned about their on-track performance in class to review on a regular basis, and staff reviewed on-track data on a monthly basis to coach/champion students. Tips for conversations with staff became the focus of the monthly family conference newsletters in [September 2024](#) and [February 2025](#), which were viewed collectively over 11,000 times.

Practices were evaluated on a monthly basis through on-track to graduation data by grade level. The goal each month was for 85% of students to demonstrate on-track performance. Monthly data averaged at 75% of all students demonstrating on-track performance with semester performance averaging at 80% of students performing on track to graduation. Qualitatively, parents began to request data asking if their students are on track rather than a grade check. The primary challenge was to reframe success with the view that deep relational quality matters more than surface-level quantity.

Utilizing student voice as the cornerstone of family engagement calls on a school to emphasize flexibility in engagement as well as find ways to support students in leading their family's engagement rather than being a silent or passive member in it. As a result of listening to student voice in family engagement, the school needs to spend time and effort in creating tangible resources that empower students in their education and growth so they may be the driving partner in family engagement in ways that meet their needs and those of their families.



Partnering with Families to Empower Students: Our Approach

This year, we are planning for meaningful conversations about student performance, to include growth/achievement against standards, work completion, and interactions with others.

Students, please make an effort to attend as you are the primary driver of your education. We believe in the power of your voice!