



Hero's Pantry

Red Hawk Ridge Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

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At Red Hawk Ridge Elementary School in Cherry Creek School District, the primary focus is on the well-being of students. One significant factor contributing to this is food. Food insecurity can adversely affect children's social skills, concentration, and overall learning. Understanding this, staff established a food pantry for those in need. This initiative could alleviate stress, enhance attendance, and boost performance. To assess the necessity of a food pantry, staff distributed a survey to identify who might benefit from food bags. The response included 87 children's names, reinforcing a belief that a food pantry would be advantageous for the community.

Initially, the Community Liaison partnered with the Principal to identify a suitable space for Hero's Pantry. The next step involved gathering food and assembling a small team to set it up. They recognized the importance of key staples such as beans, rice, pasta, lentils, and oats, which they obtained through a community food donation drive. Eastern Hills Community Church also donated to the cause. After receiving the food, they focused on stocking the Pantry and creating labels.



Once the Pantry was set up, it was time to invite the community. Staff communicated the new resource through invitations and website postings. After opening, a couple of families came and used the pantry. Later, parents offered feedback that they did not have transportation. This led to a new strategy of packing bags and delivering them to families. Currently, most family members who use the pantry have the food delivered to their homes. Many families commented about how convenient it was to have a pantry at their child's school. They could shop before or after school with or without their child. It was incredible to see how excited students were to be able to shop in the pantry.

Hero's Pantry's influence extends beyond the students it serves directly. Parents, teachers, and local organizations frequently collaborate to stock the pantry. Initiating Hero's Pantry was about storage and fostering peace of mind, resilience, and community. With careful planning and incremental steps, anyone can establish a pantry that offers security, nourishment, and sustainability.