

Parent-Teacher Conferences: An Innovative Approach

Pathways Future Center School, Adams 12 Five Star Schools

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Historically at Pathways Future Center School in Adams 12 Five Star Schools, few families attended the spring parent-teacher conferences. Recognizing that during fall conferences they host a family salsa contest and a financial aid workshop that bring in many families, staff decided to plan similar events during spring.

Planning the spring parent-teacher conferences was a school-wide effort with community partners. The Family Outreach Liaison was responsible for all communication and logistics with the community partners. The Counselor coordinated the financial aid workshop in collaboration with the Educational Opportunity Center. The Wraparound Facilitator oversaw the viewing of *Screenagers* and also supported, with grant money, the Electives Teacher and his students' art gallery. The Student & Family Outreach Program covered the cost of meals for the *Screenagers* viewers, while Chick-fil-A donated drinks. The Adams County Health Department hosted a resource table to support the event. Another community partner was Kiwanis, who brought their resource trailer. Food for Hope provided food bags for families to take home.

The main goal was to increase parents' attendance at conferences, but also to provide them access to resources. Teachers, counselors, and administrators were available without appointment. While waiting for their turn to meet with a teacher, families could visit the student gallery just outside the electives classroom, enjoy a *Screenagers* movie, and eat a Chick-fil-A dinner. The Health Department hosted a resource table to support the movie presentation. A representative from the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) helped families complete their FAFSA applications. Light refreshments were offered for families completing FAFSA. Either on their way in or at the end of the day, families "shopped" for free hygiene products, graciously donated by the Kiwanis Resource Trailer. Additionally, families were able to grab a Hope food bag on their way out.



School staff evaluated this practice using qualitative data around engagement with partners and among the community for the duration of the event. Many families followed up with the school in writing to thank them for the way they structured conferences. One of the parents said: "It was great that the food and resource trailer were there, it made it very convenient, helpful and quick to have those there while I was also meeting with the teacher. It allowed me to get helpful resources without taking additional time off work...The teachers and staff were also super friendly...I have really appreciated all the help that my son and my family have received from Pathways."