



Play. Lead. Belong.

PEAK Learning Center, Adams 12 Five Star Schools

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The PEAK program is a long-standing afterschool and summer learning initiative that provides academic support, enrichment activities, and a safe, engaging environment for students in Adams 12 Five Star Schools. Originally launched during the summer to support students experiencing homelessness, the PEAK Soccer Initiative was expanded to all 10 PEAK Learning Center sites in Adams 12 Five Star Schools. The goal of the PEAK Soccer Initiative is to increase access and opportunity for students in grades 3–5 to participate in organized sports. Planning and implementation involved a multi-agency collaboration with the Executive Director of Balòn USA, Extended Learning Manager for Adams 12, Recreation Superintendent for the City of Thornton, and PEAK Site Directors.



Soccer practices were held twice weekly for eight weeks during PEAK programming in fall and spring. Coaches hired and trained by Balòn USA delivered co-ed, developmental instruction focused on exercise, fun, and positive habits in a non-competitive environment. Games occurred on Saturdays at local parks. The City of Thornton provided fields and equipment. All students received jerseys and shin guards, and PEAK staff—along with classroom teachers and school administrators—regularly attended and supported the program. Staff used a QR code to track family attendance at each game. Extension activities included distributing soccer-themed books and math games to reinforce learning. A banquet concluded each season, recognizing players, families, and staff. By embedding soccer in PEAK, the program removed barriers like cost and transportation and supported consistent participation. Participation has shown a positive effect on school-day attendance, particularly for students experiencing high mobility.

PEAK staff collected family feedback via exit tickets, and students shared reflections through surveys and creative expressions like artwork. Balòn USA compiled and shared annual impact reports that include data on participation, engagement, and outcomes. A primary challenge has been managing high levels of interest that exceed the program's current capacity.

For those interested in replicating the PEAK Soccer Initiative, collaborative planning and consistent communication are essential. Prior to each season, district staff facilitate planning meetings with all partners. Shared planning documents centralize schedules, contact lists, and other logistics. Regular check-ins help address challenges such as staffing shortages or student conduct. Multiple funding sources are crucial for sustainability. Systems that ensure mission alignment and continuous improvement make it possible to expand thoughtfully.