

Family Night

Platte Valley Middle School

Kersey, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Platte Valley Middle School staff have hosted a Family Night for well over a decade. The event started with an academic focus; however, attendance was low. Around 2017, the practice morphed to include a fun element, a meal, and then a conversation around a more serious topic (i.e., bullying prevention, mental health, Colorado Academic Standards). Attendance was high for the fun activity and community meal, but families left before the conversation. In 2019, staff changed



the activity again to focus on dinner and fun, with no ulterior motive other than building relationships between students, their families, and staff. Family Night at Platte Valley Middle School is all about Fun, Food, and Fellowship.

While the PBIS team at the school takes the lead on the event, it is a whole-school effort. Teams of content specialists each run a different activity, all based on the evening's theme. Family Night themes have included Winter Olympics and Country Western. Groups of teachers run BINGO, dodge ball, have a cake walk, and oversee a photo booth. During the Winter Olympics night, the band teacher, who is an avid hockey fan, brought in a goalie and students and their families practiced making shots on goal. In the past, Family Nights have also included a passport for families to get a stamp for each content area or activity. Family Night happens in different months each year. This year, school staff held Family Night on the same night as the fourth quarter Parent Teacher Conferences, as attendance at conferences in the fourth quarter is traditionally low. The staff hoped to boost attendance by holding conferences first, followed by a meal and Family Night. Staff also raffled two \$200 King Soopers gift cards. Families received one raffle ticket for attending conferences and another raffle ticket for attending Family Night. Family Night is advertised through the Remind app, the school website, and in weekly parent updates from the principal and teachers.



Family Night creates a positive school experience in which parents can interact with their middle schoolers and get to know their children's teachers. Over the years, scheduling has been a challenge. Platte Valley must coordinate with other schools in the district to make sure that families are not double-booked. Student and family attendance is the primary method used to evaluate the success of the program.

Advice offered to schools hoping to utilize family nights include not getting too caught up in the desire to tie academics to the event. Academics has its place; however, what makes this practice so beneficial is that there is no academic focus. Family Nights are a time for relationship building and parents and kids having fun with their teachers and school community.



Standard 1 — Welcoming All Families
Essential Element 2 — Build Trusting Relationships