



Promising Partnerships Practices

2019

A collection of initiatives from districts and schools
about working with families and community partners
for student learning



State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education



COLORADO
Department of Education

Introduction



The State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is pleased to share this fifth annual collection of *Promising Partnership Practices*. The purpose of this book is for schools, districts, and other educational organizations in Colorado to highlight how they partner with families and the community for student success.

Over 50 years of research indicate that students are more likely to succeed both academically and behaviorally when schools, families, and communities work together. This publication includes over 50 practices categorized by the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2008), a research-based framework with which CDE and SACPIE align their partnering work (Senate Bill 09-90).



We look forward to highlighting more practices each year and to improving outcomes for students through family, school, and community partnering.

In Partnership,

DJ Anderson, SACPIE Chair

Leslie Levine, SACPIE Vice Chair

Dr. Darcy Hutchins, CDE Director of Family, School, and Community Partnerships

Cooking Matters for Families

Kullerstrand Elementary School

Wheat Ridge, CO



Staff at Kullerstrand Elementary school are always looking for opportunities to collaborate with families and other members of the school community in ways that are innovative, inclusive, and beneficial to student growth. When the Family Engagement Liaison found a program that did this and incorporated three of the six National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, the entire school was truly excited and interested. Cooking Matters for Families created an opportunity for families to actively participate in a school activity, to collaborate in student learning and healthy development at home and school, and to collaborate with community members to connect students and families with expanded learning opportunities.

Cheryl Clay, principal at Kullerstrand Elementary, regularly looks for ways to enhance experiences and programs for the Kullerstrand families. As a result, she encouraged Tim Weaver, Family Liaison at Kullerstrand, to pursue a collaboration with Cooking Matters. Mr. Weaver worked with Elizabeth Alden at Cooking Matters to go through the necessary steps to bring the course into the school. After a few weeks, all of the agreements and initiatives were in place and Cooking Matters for Families was offered to the families at Kullerstrand.

Since its inception, Cooking Matters for Families has been providing direct education to empower families to stretch their food budgets, make healthy choices and cook delicious meals at home. There were 10 groups, consisting of one parent and one student, who met for two hours each Monday evening at Kullerstrand (with one field trip to King Soopers), from February 25th through April 22nd.

The classes were taught by a volunteer chef and nutrition educator. Lessons covered meal preparation, grocery shopping, food budgeting and nutrition. Participants practiced fundamental food skills, proper knife techniques, reading ingredient labels, and making a healthy meal for a family of four on a \$10 budget. Families took home a bag of groceries after each class so they could practice the recipes taught that day!

Cooking Matters conducted a survey of participants and an evaluation of the course at the conclusion of the final class. Comments from families reflected the success of the class: “added good healthy options for the family;” “positive thinking, eating healthy;” “the class was so much fun;” “I like this class a lot, the instructor was awesome;” and “we are confident in letting our son into the kitchen to prepare foods on his own. When we had the flu he was able to make food for himself!”

One major challenge of making sure families attended regularly was actually easy to resolve due to the fact that the families were having so much fun and learning valuable skills.

Kullerstrand’s liaison states: “My advice for any school looking to engage in Cooking Matters for Families would be to recruit families well before the start of the first class, stress the importance of attendance, point out the great bonding created in the kitchen between the adult and student, and make sure that everyone knows that this is FUN, FUN, FUN!! The Cooking Matters organization is amazing, thorough, professional, and I recommend them wholeheartedly!!”

D6 Reads

Greeley-Evans District 6

Greeley, CO



Partnering with parents can be a complicated endeavor, but Greeley-Evans District 6 has found power in literature, language, and coffee. In the past year, The Department of Parent Engagement and Cultural Excellence and The District 6 Family Center (DFC) have collaborated to host several book clubs called *D6 Reads*. The idea behind *D6 Reads* is to bring in members from all over the community and district to read a book that would provoke rich conversations, relevant to current times.

An incentive that makes *D6 Reads* successful is adding beverages (providing medium-roast coffee) and a copy of the book for free (for the first 25 individuals who sign up). Parents, community leaders, and teachers have been some of the regular attendees, but the district staff who coordinated *D6 Reads* knew that they could attract more stakeholders.

In efforts to connect with different audiences, a D6 family liaison, a student from the University of Northern Colorado, and the D6 Title I Specialist coordinated the first *D6 Reads* in Spanish. Because much of the surrounding community is Spanish-speaking, the staffers felt as though it was time to bring a “Club del Libro” (“Book Club”) to D6 parents; this would serve as equitable access to the well-received *D6 Reads* series. The facilitators wanted a book that resonated with parents, and for that reason, they intentionally selected *La Distancia Entre Nosotros* (*the Distance Between Us*) by Reyna Grande.

During the four sessions, the group read parts of the book together, shared personal stories, and discussed how literature and education impact people and society. Parents who attended the Spanish book club expressed that feeling valued is important, and they appreciated having a Spanish book club that was intended for them.

After the Spanish book club was over, The District 6 Family Center (DFC) received substantial encouragement to continue to offer *D6 Reads* in Spanish. What made this book club a success was being attentive to the community and offering an opportunity to educational stakeholders who may have been otherwise overlooked. One of the parents who participated in the book club commented, “The book was great, but having other parents come and have conversations about a book in Spanish made this special, since I had not read a book in years.”

By reinforcing literacy through reading together as adults, *D6 Reads* exemplifies the DFC’s aim to “engage, empower, and inspire students and families to be successful in the schools and the community.” Book club facilitators plan to continue to expand *D6 Reads* to reach even more family, school, and community partners.

Standard 1—Welcoming All Families

D6 Reads

Una vida dividida, entre dos países

Las primeras 25 personas que se registren recibirán el libro gratis!

La Distancia Entre Nosotros

Únase con nosotros para la lectura de **La Distancia Entre Nosotros por Reyna Grande**

estudio del libro es co-patrocinado por:

Fechas: 27 de Marzo, 3, 10 y 17 de Abril.
Horas: 4:30pm a 5:30pm
Ubicación: District 6 Family Center
Facilitadores: Melissa Robles y German Hernandez

Para inscribirse llame al 970-348-6307

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Grandparent Coffee Time

Early Childhood Education at Maddox Englewood, CO

The staff at Early Childhood Education (ECE) at Maddox, located in Englewood School District, started noticing a large population of grandparents dropping off and picking up students. Right around the same time, a grandparent on the School Advisory Council wondered how she could become more involved within the school. Following discussions between the school principal and family liaisons, it was decided to start a “Grandparent Coffee Time” group. Grandparents now meet twice monthly to help foster support, share ideas, advocate for their grandchildren, and discuss ways to contribute to ECE.

The ECE at Maddox site typically has great family involvement. A noticeable change in demographic dynamics occurred and more grandparents have custody or are providing before and after school care for their grandkids. ECE staff saw a need to support these grandparents within their school community.



The school principal and two school family liaisons discussed ways to get grandparents involved within the school. The family liaisons decided on a grandparent group that would meet up two times per month for an hour and a half right after dropping off their grandkids in the morning.

The first meeting consisted of 8-10 grandparents. The group brainstormed ideas on what they wanted to get out of the grandparents group. It was determined that they would love to learn more about technology, volunteer within the school, share resources, and network with family members in similar situations. This group provided the opportunity for the

grandparents to contribute to a positive school climate, welcome all family members, and support two way communication between families and the school.

The two ECE family liaisons have done informal evaluations of the Grandparent Coffee Time group this year. Observations and qualitative data in the form of participant feedback have been gathered. They are planning to conduct pre and post surveys of this group next year. They will also continue to do a needs assessment to see where the group feels they would like support and opportunities each year. They did face some challenges as any new group does. The family liaisons realized they needed to reign in topic discussions to make sure all voices were feeling heard. Therefore, the liaisons created and followed agendas after challenges were noted.

Some advice that the two family liaisons would give to someone wanting to replicate this practice would be to make sure meeting times are convenient for families and that the invitation is shared to all.

Holiday Cheer at Rose Stein

Rose Stein Elementary School

Lakewood, CO



Celebrating is an important ingredient to building community! At Rose Stein Elementary, families, school staff, neighbors and businesses work together during the winter holiday season to deliver holiday cheer to every student with a twist - a focus on celebrating and nurturing a love for reading.

During the month of December, Rose Stein staff join forces with community partners to conduct a toy drive to assist our families during this holiday season. Parents reach out to community partners and ask for donations of toys. One week before winter break, families and community champions set up a 'toy shop' where the toys are on display. Planning committee members send invitations home for families to come and choose presents for their children.

Rose Stein staff all recognize the importance of reading habits as a key to student success. So, while families shop for toys, staff use this community-gathering opportunity to share educational reading strategies and approaches that nurture a love of reading! Families receive books and include an invitation to visit the Belmar Library where they can enjoy free events and programs planned for the children during the winter break. Families that participate in the Holiday Cheer program especially appreciate this information for the kids during the time school is closed.

The Holiday Cheer program has helped Rose Stein staff not only develop stronger and deeper relationships between all members of the school community, it has given them an additional opportunity to celebrate the importance of reading by connecting families to the local library where they can grow their child's love of reading.

Parent Coffee Chat

Holly Ridge Primary and Holly Hills Elementary School

Denver, CO



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During the 2018- 2019 school year the Holly Ridge and Holly Hills Elementary School (located in Cherry Creek School District) family liaison hosted an annual parent coffee chat. The goal is to create a warm and welcoming environment with the intent of encouraging a more inclusive school community for every family. In attendance are the school administration team and the mental health support staff. The Hollies (a collective term for both Holly Ridge and Holly Hills) have a growing number of families who come from diverse backgrounds. This coffee chat is a great way to connect families with school resources that are key to aiding in the success and development of every student.

During the morning of the coffee chat, the family liaison transforms the school library into a relaxed and inviting atmosphere. Before the event begins the administration team, mental health support staff, and the family liaison greet the families as they begin to take their seats. Local neighborhood businesses donate a light breakfast for families and staff to enjoy together. Both Spanish and Arabic interpreters are on hand for families who need interpretation.

After breakfast, staff share a 20-minute PowerPoint about school and community resources. The family liaison highlights the various food, clothing, and shelter resources available to help families have their physical needs met. The administrators and mental health team then share a little bit about themselves before discussing signs to look for in times of crisis. The mental health team also provide their hours of availability to continue any conversation that require a more discreet setting. This event is a positive way for parents and educators to connect in order to help build a strong foundation of support for the remainder of the school year.

After the coffee chat, the family engagement liaison met with the assistant principal to discuss what went well and what to improve for next time. One of the greatest challenges of the coffee chat was scheduling. Many of the families are single parents who work more than one job. Hollies' staff believe that offering a parent coffee chat in the morning as well as in the evening is a great way to communicate with more families in the future.

The Hollies' family engagement liaisons states: "If I could give another liaison advice about wanting to replicate this practice, I would say give yourself plenty of time to plan and try to communicate with teachers in order to find out more about your parent population. Building prior knowledge of your school population will help your school connect with families who are in desperate need of basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, and mental health support. A friendly face and effective communication are just a few things that we believe are key to developing a successful school year."

Parent University

Edgewater Elementary School

Edgewater, CO



Edgewater Elementary School is a wonderful Title I school that serves more than 400 students from pre-school to sixth grade in Jefferson County. Approximately 50% of our students participate in the 1-Way Dual Language Program, while the others are instructed in English. The school selected 'Welcoming All Families' from the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships for the school year 2018-2019.

One of the structures Edgewater has in place to welcome all families in the Jefferson Articulation Area is a monthly Parent University. The purpose of this is to build community while offering parent education around varied and important topics. Parent University has been in place for four years and we continue to bring in new families. The goal of this program is to build capacity in our families to increase student achievement and wellbeing.



Parent University starts with families selecting topics of interest. This school year, our families engaged in learning about social emotional topics, such as depression and suicide ideation. Experts also presented on social networking, cell phone safety, and the dangers and consequences of sexting. School staff also included fun activities that connected families with the community at large, such as the Denver Art Museum. While eating dinner, families and school staff gather to socialize and build connections with one another. After dinner, based on the selected topics, various experts in the field present interactive learning opportunities in which families can collaborate and ask questions. This structure has created bridges between our families who speak different languages and have different cultures, contributing to the culturally responsive climate that we are always striving to reach.



Even though over 30 families consistently participate in Parent University, a challenge continues to be the inclusion of more families from the Jefferson Articulation Area. To increase involvement, the school provides interpreters as well as childcare. Monthly meetings are scheduled on the last Tuesday of every month to provide consistency, and staff are thoughtful about communicating in a variety of ways to promote the program throughout the year.

For those wishing to begin an initiative such as this, the most important thing is to designate a person to plan and organize the program. They must be given ample time to plan, communicate with families, arrange for expert speakers and interpreters, and order and

pick up dinners. Edgewater staff also highly recommend that the schools' administration and staff are involved in the Parent University sessions. And most importantly, have fun, fun, fun! Si se puede!

Standard 1—Welcoming All Families

Parr Power Hour

Parr Elementary School

Arvada, CO



Staff at Parr Elementary School wanted to move past the idea of family engagement consisting of singular events and instead create practices that truly facilitate equal partnerships with every family. As a result, the school began hosting monthly coffee meetings for families that focus on what is going on in the classroom, and how parents can support their students' academic success.



Parr's Family Engagement Liaison, English as a Second Language Teacher, and Instructional Coach are involved in the planning of the family coffee meetings. The group has bi-weekly meetings to discuss the content and details of each coffee meeting. Various staff present at the meetings, based on the topic.

The coffee meetings occur on the third Wednesday of every month. In the first coffee meeting, families received an overview of what each grade level was working on in regards to literacy development. The sequential meetings focused on social-emotional learning (strategies for when children get frustrated while reading), assisting students with math strategies at home, and finding ways for families to have a voice at school. The coffee meetings are directly linked to student academic success, as it has been proven that there is a positive link between family engagement and children's math and literacy skills (Epstein, et al. 2013).

After each coffee meeting, staff ask families to write down suggestions for future topics and suggestions for improvement. The planning committee also meets after each meeting to debrief about what went well, what feedback they received, and how they can improve for the next meetings.

Not surprisingly, Parr's staff did experience some challenges during the planning and implementation process, particularly around gathering family input about the meetings. They are hoping that in the future they can give families more control of the planning of the meetings, so that the meetings can really serve what families need and want.

Parr's family engagement liaison states: "To anyone who would like to implement this practice, it is important to make the planning a collaborative effort. It is helpful to have input from all stakeholders, including teachers, administration, families, and other school staff. It is also important to give the meetings a focused goal based on your larger school goals. That will guide your planning and implementation, and it will make it easier to articulate the importance of the monthly meetings."



Resource Fair and Carnival

Everitt Middle School

Wheat Ridge, CO



For the last several years, Everitt Middle School has combined its annual Fall Festival with a community resource fair. The festival brings the community together for fun. While families enjoy the festivities, it provides easy access to community support such as Jefferson Center for Mental Health (JCMH), Family Tree, and the Migrant Education Program, just to name a few.

After year one, which was only open to our middle school population, Everitt staff decided as a committee to extend the invitation to families of children that would feed into the school, as well as the families in the neighborhood around the school. This has brought greater interest and participation and a larger number of families have gained useful information to help support their children and families.

One of the goals of this practice is to support families who are in transitional living situations and quite often lack access to resources to support their children. It also gives families the opportunity to connect with different community members in the area and build awareness of the need. Equally important, the fair provides an opportunity for families to get to know the school and staff and to feel welcomed and excited for the upcoming school year!

Many stakeholder's voices are represented on the planning committee: the principal, social worker, PTA president, school staff, and the Family Engagement Liaison. The team meets one month prior to the event to share the responsibilities and discuss logistics. Some of the shared responsibilities include: getting games, food, volunteers, set up, clean up, contacting vendors, and promotion of the event to the community.

This practice is connected to improving the quality of life of our families who are going through a difficult situation in their life. This event also brings a sense of unity to all the families of the articulation area and makes them feel more welcomed at Everitt Middle School. The positive climate of our school has improved, as families feel more comfortable and more confident in coming to our school and asking for help. Many of our elementary students and families have stated that coming to this event prior to coming to middle school has motivated them to come to the middle school as well as making their experience 'less nerve wracking'.



Everitt's Family Engagement Liaison shares the following advice: "There has to be a lot of organization and discipline when planning this kind of event. You have to take into consideration that not everything is going to be perfect but by working as a team, the event can flow easier. All members of the committee must be in agreement with the event plans and take their responsibility very seriously since each of the positions is key for the success of the event."

Standard 1—Welcoming All Families

Take Your Family to School Week

Swanson Elementary School

Arvada, CO



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Swanson Elementary School staff value the importance of building relationships between home and school. Welcoming families into Swanson is not only a goal, it is a priority. When the Family Engagement Liaison learned about the National PTA idea of Take Your Family to School Week (TYFSW), she thought this type of event would be ideal for strengthening the bond between home and school.

TYFSW was planned by the Family Engagement Committee which consists of nine staff members, in coordination with the Swanson PTA, community businesses, and families. This team worked together to plan the daily events and gather materials and resources. Additionally, the team helped facilitate and engage families during the events.

Part of the appeal of TYFSW was that a variety of activities could be offered on multiple days/times. With the wide-range of offerings, many families were able to participate in at least one event. TYFSW was 4 days this year because of a non-student contract day on Friday. Additionally, this was the same week as Valentine's Day, so many of our activities connected to the holiday. Examples of activities include:

- Monday Love Muffins- Families were invited to have a muffin with their child to start the day.
- Tuesday Snuggle up with your love bug and read- Reading is important at any age, so Swanson staff planned a school-wide Snuggle Up and Read. Students got cozy and read a book to their loved ones. Many grandparents participated as well.
- Wednesday Home Depot kids workshop- The Home Depot supplied a kit for families to build a take-home fishing game. This activity brought so much excitement! It also brought in many dads and grandpas.
- Thursday Lunch with your Valentine- Families had pizza and salad for lunch. Valentine's Day is so much fun when you spend it with someone you love.

Swanson students felt proud, confident, and quickly became leaders by showing their parents around the room or taking ownership of the moment/activity. The whole week was a great success and will continue at Swanson for years to come.

One challenge for this year's event was scheduling. Parent-teacher conferences and the non-student contact day impacted the event. Next year, the planning committee will work around these and choose times that are convenient for families.

Swanson's Family Engagement Liaison offers the following advice about planning a similar event: "I would encourage anyone to partner with their school organization such as PTA or PTO or create a committee of teachers and/or parents to provide the support needed to plan the activities. Aim to have activities at different times to allow working families to attend. Reach out to community organizations to assist you with an activity or donation."

Standard 1—Welcoming All Families

The Family Center

Greeley-Evans District 6

Greeley, CO



Greeley-Evans School District 6 serves a diverse population of about 23,000 students. The Directors of Cultural Excellence and Parent Engagement and the Director of English Language Development collaborated with each other and their team members to discuss the challenges and struggles that District 6 families experience and how the district could help. From that, the District 6 Family Center (DFC) was born. Along with providing information and resources in the school district and community, the DFC partners with many organizations to provide opportunities for families. The DFC mission is to welcome all families that come through the door, and it is home to four different programs centered around student and family support:

- *The Families in Transition Program* (McKinney-Vento), serving over 650 homeless children and youth
- *Migrant Education Program*, serving over 700 migrant students
- *Newcomers Program*, serving over 300 newcomer students
- *21st Century Grant*, with various parent programs & before- and after- school programs

Several partnerships have emerged for the DFC, which have benefited the local community:

- The DFC has partnered with the *Weld County Food Bank*, working together to provide students with weekend food during the school year through the Food Pack Program. Through this partnership, the DFC was also able to set up a food pantry that is available during business hours all year long for any family in need.
- The DFC set up a boutique through a partnership with *A Precious Child* so that items (e.g., household goods, clothing, hygiene products, & diapers) are available for families.
- A partnership with *The Immigrant and Refugee Center* has allowed the DFC to provide parent classes (i.e., English, GED, and Citizenship). This helps the DFC to build relationships with parents who participate. Child Care is provided during the classes.
- *Cooking Matters* is a valuable partnership that allows the DFC to host cooking classes for parents during the day so they can gain some knowledge about nutritious foods and cost-effective ways to cook. Child Care is provided during the classes.
- The DFC has also been able to partner with the *Department of Human Services* to have a Community Outreach member at the DFC two days a week to help families apply for benefits or to answer questions.

The main purpose of the District 6 Family Center is to have a “one-stop shop” for families and to establish a strong relationship between the district, its students’ parents, and Greeley-Evans partners. As the DFC continues to grow, it takes pride in bringing parents together and building a wider bridge to connect them to the community.

Who-Ville Winter Celebration

Little Elementary School

Arvada, CO



Knowing that the holiday season is not always a time of joy and cheer for everyone, staff at Little Elementary School worked purposefully to create a special event for our families before winter break. Teachers and staff united in an effort to ensure that all students have gifts and food, and many community partners linked arms with us to make this possible. Churches, food pantries, local stores, and business owners all played an important part and we were able to create a magical evening in Who-Ville with the Who's and of course, the Grinch!

Volunteers from a local church spent many hours painting and decorating props, and totally transformed the gymnasium with lights, trees and painted Who-Ville houses. The stage was set up for a musical performance with hand bells by our fifth grade class, and it was even more appealing in colorful costumes and some very unusual hairstyles! The Grinch showed up unexpectedly (to the delight of the kids), and got up to all kinds of mischief before settling down in the photo booth area for pictures with families. In the cafeteria, families gathered for food and cotton candy, and were invited to the cookie decorating table. The church volunteers did a wonderful job serving food and also engaging with students and families working at craft and game tables. Not only were staff grateful for their time, but also for the help they offered to families by providing much needed gifts and food baskets for the Holiday Season.

Many families dressed up like adorable Who-Ville characters. One of the stations everyone really enjoyed was the Hair Salon, where attendees got a hair make-over and walked away with lots of hairspray, ribbons and color. Another family favorite was the cultural table that displayed different seasonal holiday celebrations all over the world. Little's Jewish families created posters highlighting Hanukkah, displaying the Menorah and demonstrating the traditional game that is played with a dreidel. Providing interactive experiences were important to Little Elementary staff, and family engagement was the goal. Seeing students explore and ask questions about other cultures added an additional dimension of learning.

During the event, there was a sense of community in the building as families connected with each other and enjoyed informal conversations with the teachers and staff. Staff welcomed families as they entered the school and were greeted at the door with a little gift at the end of the evening. The goal was to make everyone feel welcome and included, and the many smiles staff saw that night confirmed that the Winter Celebration is really worth repeating every year!

Little Elementary's Family Engagement Liaison states: "The secret to success in planning a many-faceted event is collaboration with community partners such as churches, local food pantries and other community groups with an interest in volunteering. Early planning is vital and so is constant communication and collaboration with staff, teachers, and everyone on the planning committee. It is exciting to see such enthusiasm as the school and families work together towards a common goal."

1:1 Community Conversations

Riverview School

Glenwood Springs, CO



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Riverview School was launched in the 2017-2018 school year to provide a PK-8 option in the Roaring Fork School District located between the communities of Glenwood Springs and Carbondale. During the design stages of the school launch, school leadership undertook a robust process to solicit community input about what type of school they hoped for. The practice described here is of the necessary evolution that effort, now that the school is up and running. 1:1 Community Conversations is directly connected to Riverview's vision, which was authored by the community.

Brianda Cervantes, the Community School Coordinator at Riverview, was the lead for applying community organizing principles to family engagement. Brianda's role has evolved over her two years at the school, moving from a hybrid role that combined elements of a community liaison with front office support to a role with a clear focus on building relationships and partnerships with families and community organizations. Brianda also works closely with the Family Liaison at Riverview to create a welcoming environment and opportunities for families to share their voice inside the school. Finally, she also works closely with the Family Services Department at the district to connect families to available resources and basic needs services outside the building.

The essential element of applying community organizing principles to family engagement is through hosting 1:1 conversations with families. Brianda started outreach at the beginning of the year to families she already had relationships with in addition to making cold calls. She leveraged opportunities to connect with families in person (events, pick up and drop off, front office time, registration, lunch and bus duty, student leadership class) and then would follow up to schedule a meeting, if they were interested.

Meetings primarily took place at families' homes and usually lasted 30-40 minutes. The 1:1 was a chance for a casual conversation about what the family's experience at the school has been like and what their hopes and dreams are, both for their children and for themselves. By asking about the needs and aspirations of both the students and their parents, Brianda is able to demonstrate to families that the school is invested in the success of the whole family, which in turn strengthens the partnership and opens up an avenue for honest dialogue between home and school. In order to maximize the impact of the 1:1's, Brianda would regularly debrief her conversations with her coach and report out on what she learned to the leadership team in order to ensure they were hearing the feedback from families.

A major foundation and lesson learned for successful implementation of this practice is the importance of having someone in your school whose role is specifically focused on connecting with the community and providing the structural and logistical support for that partnership to be built. Additionally, setting aside dedicated days or blocks of time for this 1:1 engagement meant that Brianda could prioritize these conversations even when the everyday emergencies of life in a school would arise.

Communicating through Seesaw

Gunnison Lake School

Gunnison, CO



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Jessica McNary, a Kindergarten teacher at Gunnison Lake School knows how schedules and geography can impact how teachers and parents partner for the success of students, particularly inside the school building. Between work schedules and living in a rural community, many families cannot attend school-based functions. Utilizing alternative platforms of communication, such as Twitter and Seesaw, have allowed Ms. McNary to regularly communicate with families.

When Jessica first started using social media to communicate, only a few parents followed her. She would encourage families to follow the class and even tried giving students the job of “Twitter person,” where they would create a daily post about an activity of the day. Jessica felt good about Twitter, but was searching for something more to involve students and parents.



Enter Seesaw, a student driven digital portfolio and a way to communicate with parents. Jessica learned that a colleague, 2nd grade teacher Mandy Harris, was a Seesaw Ambassador and she took a few professional development classes from her. Jessica created portfolios for her students, taught them how to make posts, and connected their portfolios with their parents. Currently Jessica’s Kindergarten class has made 649 posts during the 2018-19 school year, and 14 out of 17 families were connected digitally.

During special speakers, performances, and field trips, Jessica frequently takes video or photos and post to all students’ journals. This way, parents can see their children if they are not able to attend the event in person. As soon as students post to Seesaw, parents are notified on their phone through the family Seesaw app and are able to view, like, and even comment on their students work. Jessica projects Seesaw on the Smartboard and reads likes and comments from parents. Those students just beam with pride.



Seesaw allows for easy two-way communication. Parents send simple messages like changes in pickup, or to check a backpack for a certain note. Also, parents often share photos or videos of their kids on the weekend and evenings so Jessica able to see a glimpse into their lives outside of school.

Jessica states: “My advice to others wanting to replicate the family engagement practice is to select a platform so

easy a kindergartener can do it! Seesaw is such a user friendly app that my kindergarten students even taught 5th graders how to login and make a post. Seesaw can be done with as little as one device in a classroom.”

Because of the success in Jessica’s class, Gunnison Lake School has decided implement Seesaw schoolwide next year. Every student will have a digital portfolio!

Family Ambassadors

Eiber Elementary School

Lakewood, CO



Eiber Elementary School, in Jeffco Public Schools, believes in the power of meaningful two-way communication with families, especially when it positively impacts student success. This year, staff at Eiber started working closely with, and listening to, every family. Through a more robust partnership, Eiber staff knew they could improve and develop better ways to keep all families informed about their child’s learning and needs as well as community events and happenings at school.

Although the school uses many innovative ways to communicate with our community (e.g., Peachjar, Instagram, Twitter, School Messenger, Next-door, Facebook and Remind), one of the most powerful ways to communicate and build community lies within the families themselves!

During the 2018-19 school year, Eiber’s family engagement liaison led the staff to make a concerted effort to tap into that power by launching a Family Ambassador program. Staff gathered a group of families that became greeters and communication experts. These goodwill ambassadors helped to inform other families about all the ways the school partners with parents and community members.

Family Ambassadors then extend an invitation to join! Staff encourage Eiber Ambassadors to reach out during peak family contact times, such as morning drop off and dismissal to practice their approach other parents. During these connecting moments, ambassadors explain what the school is doing and often even exchange contact information. School staff and teachers also make sure to reach out to every family to ask them to join one of the many communication pathways.



Eiber’s goal is to continue developing opportunities for families so they become the school’s most valuable community champions. Eiber’s Family Engagement Liaison states: “We all benefit when we get to know each other; our staff, families and community partners as well. We have noticed more families participating in other programs such as WATCH DOGS, PTA, and events like Teachers Appreciation Day and the Fitness Fun Festival.”

Families who participate have expressed that they feel valued and united. They are more motivated to be in contact with the staff and teachers to seek ways to help their kids achieve and grow.

Eiber’s liaison continues: “We have found that communicating effectively is truly rooted in relationships and has brought our school community closer: ONE with ONE goal—student success.”

Family Outreach Collaboration

Jefferson Junior/Senior High School

Edgewater, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Helping families feel connected and supported can be challenging once children leave elementary school. Yet, it is more important than ever to create a network of support once they enter Junior/Senior High School. Jefferson Junior/Senior High School's Family Engagement Liaison (FEL) and Community Family Connection Liaison (CFC) saw an opportunity to do just that. Each Liaison plays a specific role, but their common ground is building partnerships and outreach to families that often feel disconnected or overlooked. Ultimately, student success is the end goal of this collaborative work.



The original idea seemed simple: contact families and help them get connected to healthcare coverage (including Medicaid, since the Community Family Connection team member is CASS Certified). But the team quickly saw a valuable opportunity in front of them. By entering into a conversation with a family, they could listen to and value the family and assess their needs. Then, attend to those needs by connecting the family to relevant community resources.

To do this well, the team sought support from administrators, teachers, counselors, and the school nurse. Setting a consistent time to make the personal outreach phone calls ensured that families were reached. Enlisting help from district interpreters respected families' spoken language. The Registration/Counseling Secretary created a digital format to capture data, allowing for efficiency and eliminating duplication of effort. Team coordinators provided direction with the implementation of the program, but the energy of the FEL/CFC team is what propelled the program forward.

Evaluation of the program is ongoing. The team can easily measure which families have been contacted and what needs are being met. The challenge of the program is a good one to have: the outreach isn't about just *one thing* - it has opened a dialog and opportunity to build trust, awareness, and connectedness.

The best advice to starting a program like this is to be willing to begin a conversation with families - be ready to listen and then act. Create an organized way to keep track of your outreach and make sure that you can follow through with families' needs.

Family Recruiter Program

Rocky Mountain Prep
Denver and Aurora, CO



Rocky Mountain Prep is a network of four elementary charter schools located in Denver and Aurora. Their mission is focused on every student and staff reaching their full potential. Rocky Mountain Prep believes that families know their students best and need access to information to be able to navigate, choose, and advocate for the educational experiences that best help their student(s) reach their full potential. Three years ago, Rocky Mountain Prep launched their family recruiter program to support this vision to become a reality.

The family recruiter program seeks to accomplish the following: [1] Removing school officials as the source of information and having families talk directly to other families about how to consider the choice of school that would be best for them [2] Help Rocky Mountain Prep reach their own enrollment goals through direct outreach to community resources and families [3] Develop families as advocates and leaders to help bring about the change they seek at Rocky Mountain Prep and the community and [4] Create opportunities for parents and guardians to continue to grow and reach their own potential to break down systemic oppression.

To accomplish this vision, Rocky Mountain Prep focuses on a clear and robust hiring, onboarding, training, and development program. Family recruiter candidates are nominated by the schools and interviewed for the position by network support team members. They go through a three day training focused on introducing the recruiters to soft and hard skills including data literacy, evaluating quality schools, communicating effectively with families, navigating school choice resources, and goal setting. Throughout the choice cycle, family recruiters meet one-on-one weekly to receive coaching as well as give feedback to their manager. Through this program, Rocky Mountain Prep has extended its reach in talking with families and also seen a 30% increase in enrollment across the network two years in a row.

Rocky Mountain Prep believes that this work is vital to its mission and therefore compensates the recruiters. Currently, the program is more robust during the key enrollment season and includes ten families, nine working as recruiters, and one as a data intern, focused on keeping data clean within a CRM. During the slower season there are three families that stay on. Supporting families in their growth is a key priority, and three of the family recruiters have gone on to have full-time positions at the campuses.

Rocky Mountain Prep is working to continue to build off of and improve this program. Planned next steps include expanding the program to year-round, continuing to create more paths for growth, expanding the role to include more family engagement and advocacy, and connecting with outside partners who are also working to ensure all families have access to a quality school and voice in the creation of that school.

FSCP Network Site

Thompson School District

Loveland, CO



To build personnel capacity and improve Family, School, and Community Partnership (FSCP) practices throughout the district, Thompson School District (TSD) has launched a professional network website called the FSCP Network Site. This Site offers resources to support staff in their efforts to implement strong FSCP practices in schools. The goal of this network site is to enable easy access for staff and administrators to FSCP training, resources and tools, to share promising FSCP practices, and to engage in virtual discussion groups regarding FSCP work.

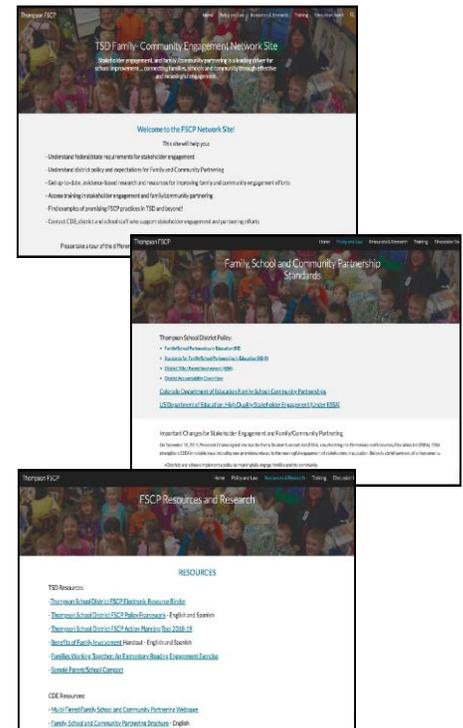
Federal Programs staff, in conjunction with the district FSCP Team, created this network site to support school-based personnel in their understanding and implementation of FSCP standard-based practices. District staff continue to update and refresh content so educators can stay up to date with the latest in FSCP research, practices, and guidance. The site also contains a variety of training modules that can be accessed independently by educators, utilized by site-based administrators for all-staff trainings, or customized to provide targeted support by district FSCP staff.

The FSCP Network Site is an important tool for helping staff create and sustain these strong family relationships. By ensuring staff have easy access to tools and resources, TSD staff hope to improve family engagement capacity to influence positive student outcomes.

The Site includes Federal and State FSCP guidance, District FSCP policies and standards, a robust menu of FSCP organizations, current research and literature reviews, examples of promising practices at other schools and districts, and FSCP training and professional development offerings. The FSCP Network site also includes an online FSCP Binder that houses resources for supporting families in the areas of Attendance, Culture and Equity, Health and Safety, Parent Training, and Community Resources. The FSCP Network site also offers a discussion board for professionals to share their practices and experiences, to ask questions, and address concerns.

To evaluate impact, the district tracks analytics data, where staff can view and analyze site visits and trends in content access. District staff also track FSCP training opportunities offered throughout the district. Two challenges faced in the implementation of this practice was creating a user-intuitive format for content and page navigation, and scaling up use across the district through communication, promotion, and hands-on opportunities for staff.

Standard 2—Communicating Effectively



Home Visits

The New America School Lakewood, CO



The New America School in Lakewood serves over 300 students from all over the world, including Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Eastern European nations. The school participates in home visits with the goal of welcoming families into the school, facilitating communication around re-engagement, and building relationships to ensure student success.



Family Engagement Liaison Yvette Martinez, Building Manager Jesus Adrian Chavez, Building Monitor Albertano Gonzalez, and new to the school Truancy Specialist Carlos Trujillo are part of the home visit team and have been collaborating with New America families in these home visits.

Home Visits are usually scheduled ahead of time with families via phone. During these visits, the team travels to welcome new families and students, as well those returning. Most visits include a discussion with students and families about the importance of school attendance. The team and families discuss barriers and challenges of attending school as well as share ideas and jointly make a plan to improve attendance and engagement.

The team arrives prepared to share credits earned and needed, grades, teacher concerns, and strategies to include families in the discussion and plan. Visits are also scheduled for young parents attending The New America School who will benefit from resources in the community. The school believes that, through the home visits, families will feel better equipped and supported so that their student can grow and succeed.

The New America School has had positive feedback on surveys as well as everyday interactions with students and families. Even with some challenges with time and staff availability, the school believes that home visits will continue with the hopes of building strong relationships and creating a strong community.

Families and students have expressed that home visits are a great opportunity to have conversations around other supports to motivate them to continue their education. “At first, we were not really open to the idea of having someone from the school come to our home. But after that first visit, we know that they have my daughter’s best interest at heart and they value her as a young mom and believe in her,” said a grandmother.

Understanding Family Partnering Data

Jeffco Public School District
Golden, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

While Jeffco Public School District has done well on family engagement surveys in the past, little time has been devoted to training families or school staff on the basics of meaningful family engagement outside of Title I schools. New energy around the release of the “Jeffco Generations” strategic plan in 2017 encouraged schools to take on family engagement in a different way.

To that end, “Articulation Area” Family Engagement meetings are held throughout the district. Usually, the process starts with a meeting involving the community superintendent and all principals in a given articulation area to decide on details. Promotional materials are created and provided to the schools so they can advertise to their individual communities. Most often, the event is held at the feeder high school with the school’s principal taking the lead as host. Food is provided in a variety of ways from PTA/PTO, school funds, or Title I funds. Childcare is handled by the high school’s National Honor Society students.



A typical evening is as follows: Opening and presentation by the superintendent followed by the sharing of family engagement research, foundational documents (National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and Dual Capacity Framework), and family school partnership data for each school. Participants are grouped by school and they participate in a “sorting” activity around their current family engagement initiatives using the National Standards for Family School Partnerships as reference. Successes and opportunities are shared with the whole group and then question and answer time finishes off the evening.

Participants fill out feedback forms at the end of the event and the results are overwhelmingly positive. Most ask for more events of this nature and more time to talk in their school groups. Some schools replicate the sorting activity with staff and families in their individual schools and additional materials/training is frequently requested.

These events are a wonderful opportunity to introduce family engagement from a community perspective and allows for schools to see how the family engagement work they do impacts student learning. When planning this type of evening, pre-planning is critical. Principals appreciate that promotional materials are already created and a promotion plan is provided to them with dates attached (messenger phone calls, marquee wording, website promotion, social media blurbs). Schools truly appreciate having the logistics handled but the flow and format of the evening is determined by them as they know their communities best. Provide more time than you think for discussion. Once people start talking about family engagement, they want to keep the conversations going!

Standard 2—Communicating Effectively

A Fruitful Pre-K Math Intervention

Aurora Head Start

Aurora, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

In August 2017 staff at Aurora Head Start began to implement a 2-year initiative to improve children’s math outcomes that was partially funded by the Rose Community Foundation. Aurora Head Start’s leadership strives towards an inclusive and collaborative learning environment where student achievement initiatives include three components: the children, their families, and staff.



The first component of the initiative was to ensure all Pre-K children participated in series of 100 powerful math activities. The activities were facilitated in small groups of 1-1 and embedded in play with storytelling and problem-solving aspects. Dual language, language, and English as a Second Language strategies were an essential part of the approach. Children readily joined and enjoyed these math activities.

The second component of the initiative was for staff to help families become aware of activities to conduct at home to help their children meet targets of the [Early Learning Outcomes Framework](#). To accomplish this goal, Aurora Head Start held five family math events in both English and Spanish. Over 110 families participated in these events. Family Coaches, School Readiness Coaches, and Site Supervisors facilitated the family math events. During the family math events, children and their families engaged in math play and math talk using common household items. Families became more aware of the importance of math play with their children.



The third component of the initiative was to engage staff in intensive, long term, job-embedded professional development related to math. Pre-K teachers, mentor teachers, coaches, supervisors, and education directors participated in professional development related to how young children learn math, developmental paths of mathematical thinking, math talk, and best practices for fostering math development in 3-5 year olds. Rubrics that defined the method and reflective analysis of videotaped lessons were part of the professional learning opportunities.

In the two years of implementation, Aurora Head Start documented huge gains in student achievement, as evidenced in the Teaching Strategies Gold data in the chart below.

All Children in Head Start/Early Head Start Who Met or Exceeded Expectations for Math		
The year prior to the intervention	Fall 2016 - 25%	Spring 2017 - 42%
The 1 st year of the intervention	Fall 2017 - 33%	Spring 2018 - 85%

A Healthy State of Mind

Vaughn Elementary School—Community P in APS

Aurora, CO



Aurora Public Schools' Community P Family Liaisons continue to be committed in creating partnerships with every student and family. To that end, one goal within Community P is to engage parents at community meetings by informing and empowering them so that they are knowledgeable and prepared to support the education and well-being of their children.

A Healthy State of Mind initiative stemmed from multiple parents voicing concern about mental health. The Community P liaisons from Laredo CDC, Laredo, Elkhart, Sable, Altura, Vaughn, Sixth Ave., East Middle School, and Hinkley High School decided to pool their resources to address this growing challenge of mental health and social-emotional learning.

Community P liaisons planned a workshop for families to learn more about the importance of positive mental health and how to encourage social-emotional learning outside of school. Presenters included the Preschool Psychologist at Laredo CDC, East Middle School's psychologist, Health One, the Aurora Resiliency Center, and Speak Now. Parents received information about warning signs that a child might need mental health support, suicide prevention, how to talk to your child, how to ask for help, where to go for help, and how to involve your child in self-advocacy.

Families and school staff know that in order for students to be academically successful in school, they also need to practice handling challenges on that road to success. By providing this knowledge to families, they can be the conduits to help their children gain important life skills.

Based on parent feedback and the discussions during the presentations, this was the most successful and interesting community meeting to date. Parents left feeling empowered and supported. One family member said, "I wish we had more time to talk about this. I felt that every question was good and every answer was what I needed to hear to help my child."

The conversations were intimate, challenging, and insightful. Those who shared did so without filters or fear of judgment. What they left with was the knowledge that they are not alone and there is help. They also left knowing that in order for children and youth to be successful in school, they also need to be successful in handling the challenges they will face on that road to success.

Vaughn Elementary School's family liaison shares the following advice about planning a similar event: "Come with a purpose and goal, take notes, delegate tasks, check in often, and communicate amongst your group often so that a few people are not the only ones doing all the work."

Blessings in a Backpack

Park Lane Elementary School

Aurora, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Park Lane Elementary School, located in Aurora Public Schools, recently partnered with Blessings in a Backpack to provide extra meals for families in need. A representative from the organization initiated the partnership with the school and the principal jumped on the opportunity! Blessings in a Backpack works with Cigna to choose schools in which they donate healthy snacks over the weekend for students and families needing extra food.



Blessings in a Backpack normally gives small bags of food to students whose families are struggling, but Park Lane was given the opportunity to give each student a bag of snacks to take home. The family liaison received several boxes from Cigna twice a month and distributed the small bags of snacks to each student every Friday right before the bell rang.

Each student put the small clear bag of snacks in their backpack to take home for the weekend. The snacks included cookies, cheese crackers, beef jerky, canned fruit, cheese, cereal, and other healthy snacks. Cigna sends two different varieties of snacks that students can choose from. Staff report that students love it and look forward to their Friday snack day! Many students commented that this was the highlight of their week.

Park Lane's family liaison states: "We believe that Blessings in a Backpack owns up to its name, it is a blessing. The only downside to this was that Cigna was not able to come and meet our wonderful students for an assembly. A few students were able to write a thank you card to Cigna and we were able to show them our gratitude."

The liaison continues: "I would highly recommend this program to other schools in our district. This program was a gift from heaven for our students. They so enjoyed it! We are thankful that we are going to be able to have this program again next school year. The Blessings will continue for Park Lane students."



Computers for Students

North Middle School Health Sciences & Technology

Aurora, CO



North Middle School Health Sciences & Technology Campus is located in the heart of North Aurora, Colorado. It is the epicenter of where the diverse community paints the city of its distinct blend of cultures. The schools' demographics are in constant change and with it are the needs of the community. North Middle School is committed to acknowledge and help mitigate the educational and life challenges students encounter. Sometimes it can be getting the extra help with homework, and other times is providing the necessary tools.

At the beginning of the year, staff met with several families and learned that many do not have a computer at home. This impacted students' ability to complete many homework assignments. The mission then became to find computers for families at a low cost. Inclusively, teachers upload their assignments and homework online through Google Classroom. However, students without a computer at home cannot take advantage of accessing their assignments from home.

North Middle School submitted an application to Groove Auto for the Drive for Education grant in order to cover most of the cost of the computers. The application was approved and grant funds distributed. The next step was to find an organization that provided computers at a low cost. North's family liaisons found a non-profit organization with the same mission. PCs for People partnered with North Middle School to provide affordable computers for families.



Although staff knew the need for computers was there, it was a challenge to ensure the grant covered computers for every family in need. Consequently, the family liaison informed all advisory teachers to tell their students that they could be selected to get a computer at a low cost of \$20 if they wrote a letter explaining how it would help them in their academic success. The liaison received 83 letters and they were all selected. Finally, we had to plan an event for the computer distribution.



North Middle distributed the computers at a celebration event. The school partnered with a local Chick-Fil-A to provide dinner, free of cost, for families in attendance. PCs for People brought desktop computers programmed with Microsoft and antivirus software. They also informed the families about internet options at a low cost and gave them a full year warranty on their computer.

Individual conversations with parents at the beginning of the school year is what led to this event. "It takes a village to raise a child." The computer distribution event at North Middle School is a representation of what the community can accomplish when it comes together.

Standard 3—Supporting Student Success

Family Literacy Classes

Adams 12, Adams 14, and Metro State University
Adams County, CO



The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Adult Education Initiatives (AEI) has provided a three year Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) grant to Adams 14 Schools. Adams 14 and Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU) partnered with Adams 12 Five Star Schools to provide adult education to adults in need of English Language skills and/or a High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma.

The courses include family literacy, six levels of English as a second language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE)/ HSE exam preparation, and Career Pathways Courses. During the 2018-19 school year, seven schools hosted the classes. Morning and evening classes are available, Monday-Thursday. Classes in four of the locations are offered all months throughout the year with the exception of July and August.



The MSU Denver Family Literacy Program offers English language acquisition, computer skills development, and parenting coursework across a range of thematic units. Families with children ages 1-5 are offered a concurrent play-based preschool program in district provided space. To instill an early love of learning, parents spend time weekly in the early learning environment participating in literacy activities with their children. Organized service learning experiences for parents and children contribute to the greater community.

Thus far, the partnership has served 530 students in the evening, 117 of whom are family literacy program participants. Of those 117, 58 are preschool families and 56 preschool children.

MSU Denver has been a critical partner in this endeavor, as they teach classes and connect families with their schools and communities through genuine family engagement activities at Stem Launch, McElwain Elementary and Rose Hill Elementary. Adams 12 has served as the entity that provides classroom space, parent referrals, and financial assistance so parents may pay for classes, attending to logistical issues, providing assistance covering costs for supplies, etc.



Together, the partnership has served hundreds of Adams County families to improve their English skills, engage them in their local schools to increase student academic achievement, obtain their HSE diploma, and/or improve their career prospects. It takes a great deal of communication, grit, perseverance, and a passion to serve our

Adams community! Sharing resources, eliminating territorial trends, and having a true understanding that the community as a whole benefits with increased educational opportunities is what makes this a positive and sustainable partnership.

Standard 3—Supporting Student Success

Family Math Game Night

Fitzmorris Elementary School

Arvada, CO



The struggle with ‘new math’ has often been a topic of frustration with families at Fitzmorris Elementary School. Family Math Game Night is one way that staff continue to support families with strategies to better answer their ‘new math’ questions and build their capacity to support every student. The main goal of the game night is to look at what families need, and to show them what math learning looks like in classrooms.

Fitzmorris’ community outreach team planned the event. The team consists of class teachers, a community member, and the family engagement liaison. Members sought support from community businesses to donate food and prizes for drawings held that evening. Teachers shared ideas for the take-home games and flyer development.

Family Math Game Night started with a casual get-to-know-you dinner. Throughout the evening, family math night activities encouraged students, parents, and teachers to interact with math learning. Most of the activities were designed to engage caregivers in their child’s learning. Students then took the lead and were excited when it came to sharing info about the games with their family members.

Fitzmorris’ principal shared instructional math information to the whole group. Through this “New Math Number Talk”, families learned the options students encounter during math class. Families were encouraged to keep this information in mind when helping their children at home. Teachers were available to review math game information. All families received games to play at home with their children.

The community outreach team received feedback from families through their response to questions posted by the front exit. Families were asked to give feedback from the evening and provide any suggestions for improvement for future events. Their feedback will help the team cultivate and improve future events.

Fitzmorris’ Family Engagement Liaisons states: “When planning a math game night event it is important to look at the needs of your students. This helps planning to stay focused on the ‘Why’ of the event. Putting together a team to plan and share in ideas is crucial. The support of your principal and teachers, looking at feedback from students and caregivers helps to keep the end goal in mind. Be sure to reach out to community businesses to see if they can support your event in any way. Getting feedback from families will help with planning future events.”

Foothills Innovation Block

Foothills Elementary School

Lakewood, CO



During the 2018-2019 school year, students at Foothills Elementary School participated in the Foothills Innovation Block. The Foothills Innovation Block is a 45-minute window of elective time that takes place at the end of the day on Friday afternoon. It originated from the collateral alignment that we have committed to as an articulation area with the Green Mountain High School Academy Program, which gives students the opportunity to discover their love of learning through the pathways of Arts and Humanities, STEM, Health and Human Services, and Business and Global Studies.

Near the end of the 2017-2018 school year, teachers and staff were asked to identify their passion. Next, they were asked if they had the opportunity, how they would make an elective out of that said passion. The result of asking that simple question equated into the vast amount of elective opportunities for students during their Innovation Block. Examples of activities included: Purposeful Play, Maker Space with Recycled Materials, Wood Making, Coding Kids, Blocks Rock-Legos, Communication Technology, Board Games, Garden/Aquaponics, Sphero Hero's, Yearbook, Learn Japanese, Ping-Pong, Beginning Guitar, Gymnastics, Chess, Engineering/Construction, and Foothills Foodies Foodbank.

Planning and implementing the Innovation Block was a community-wide effort. Partners in Education (PIE) families and the PTA participated in the organization and decision-making about electives. In January, Foothills hosted an Open House to highlight all of our innovations in an expo style showcase. Families, community members, alumni, and even Lakewood's mayor attended the event. The PTA provided dinner for the occasion.

This method of exploratory learning has proven to have a direct impact within the Foothills Elementary culture and climate by providing a collaborative, creative, and social-emotional outlet for students to work together as a team and put the power of education in their hands. The School-Wide Information System (SWIS) Data has shown that discipline referrals on Friday afternoons has gone down significantly from 34 referrals to only two within one school year. Staff attribute this to providing students with a variety of opportunities to experience deliberate and purposeful ways to lead their own learning.

Another positive impact that Foothills staff have identified is that students who may have an economic disadvantage now have opportunities to participate in club-like activities that they would have not had the ability to do so if the Innovation Block was not offered. The Innovation Block provides programs where student talents can be nurtured and allowed to flourish beyond just the classroom also including at home in their community and globally. By defining each elective and categorizing them into the four Academies (Arts and the Humanities, STEM, Health and Human Services, and Business and Global Studies), the Foothills Innovation Block is laying the foundation for students to enter middle school, high school, and beyond with confidence, preparation, and experience that will cultivate their abilities in whatever career pathway they choose to pursue.

Jump into Fall – Fall for Math

Lasley Elementary School

Lakewood, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

As leaves flutter to the ground in November, families filter into Lasley Elementary for Jump into Fall - Fall for Math evening of learning. The goal of the activity is to make learning interactive, understandable, and fun for kids and families. Math games and learning, from Kindergarten to 6th grade level, were available for exploring.

Planning began early in the year to ensure a well thought out and organized event. The planning team included the principal, instructional coach, DTL (digital teacher librarian), ESL, primary and secondary teachers as well as the Family Engagement Liaison. Math can feel intimidating, so all skill levels were considered to ensure an inclusive school-wide event. Community partners were instrumental in providing materials for games and prizes.

On the night of the event, families received a 'scorecard' with the objective to visit multiple grade levels, where they would explore, learn, and participate in games like Bean Bag Bingo. Math games were leveled to all ages, so regardless of what classroom a family visited, children of all grade levels could adapt the game to their learning needs. Grade level teacher teams hosted families in classrooms and encouraged them to extend their learning at home. Fourth graders took their math learning to another dimension by linking their math games with their Colorado History Unit. Additionally, the fourth graders added a musical performance.

Dinner was available for families at their leisure which helped logistically when serving a large number of people. Area churches donated math games, decks of cards, and flash cards that were used as prizes for attendees that completed their entire scorecard. The evening was very well attended, and it was noted that this event gave families an opportunity to meet teachers at multiple grade levels and explore the other classrooms.

Timing to meet the needs of families and staff is always a challenge. However, families provided feedback that they wanted *even more* time and expanded learning activities to every classroom - not just grade level. It was important to make sure the games were not repetitive and that they used the entire spectrum of math skills and concepts. Teachers, ESL teacher, Instructional Coach, and Family Engagement Liaison worked collaboratively to ensure this was accomplished. Exit surveys showed that there was a greater turnout in the upper elementary grade levels (4th-6th) than previous years. This could indicate that families of 4th graders showed up for the added musical performance.

Staff and teachers can really set the tone by making it a priority to welcome each and every family into the learning space. Meeting the linguistic needs of all families truly means *all* families can fully participate - this cannot be overlooked. Lasley staff feel this event was a success because they were reminded that kids love to come to school and interact with their friends, families, and teachers in a way that looks and feels very different than the typical school day. When a school becomes a magical place to learn, the learning comes easy.

Standard 3—Supporting Student Success

Parent Teacher Association Learning Series

Thomson Elementary School

Arvada, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Thomson Elementary School’s Parent Teacher Association (PTA), in partnership with school staff, created and implemented a PTA Learning Series to support student success by providing learning opportunities for families. The strategy for implementing this practice is to utilize opportunities already available.

In an effort to work smarter, not harder, families and staff collaborate to transform PTA meetings from “business only” to a “Learning Series” that connect with current Family Tea gatherings. As part of Thomson’s commitment to student success, during this school year, PTA and Family Tea invited guest speakers to discuss topics such as Social Emotional Development, Executive Functioning, Digital Safety, and Health and Wellness (to name a few). In addition, the school also offered opportunities to support the school-wide reading goal. Guest speakers included staff members, Jefferson Center for Mental Health, the local library, and community partners. These topics were developed in part from responses to family feedback surveys.

By offering these learning opportunities, families receive additional tools and support to implement learning at home. For example, the Digital Safety presentation provided families with access to an online screen time calculator, and the Social Emotional presentation offered families access to teacher-created videos on task initiation and organization. As a result, Thomson staff continue to see an increase in attendance by offering morning and evening learning opportunities for families (as evidenced by sign-in sheets and an increase in family volunteers).

Family feedback is routinely requested to determine topics offered as a means to elevate the commitment to student success within the National Standards for Family-School Partnership. Thomson’s biggest area of opportunity for improvement lies in earlier planning. In order to have smoother implementation, staff will begin the planning process earlier in the school year so that organizers can inform families well in advance of their learning opportunities. Additionally, school staff plan to solicit teacher feedback in developing topics so that we can continue to connect classroom learning to at-home learning.

Thomson’s family engagement liaison offers the following advice to other schools wanting to implement a similar practice: “An important strategy that we would like to share with others is to thoroughly assess what resources are already available. In Thomson Elementary’s case, we chose to strengthen and utilize systems already in place, and the expertise of families, community, and staff. By working smarter, not harder, we were able to establish practices that can be built upon year after year to support student success.”

Partnerships to Support Mental Health

Alameda Jr/Sr High School

Lakewood, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Alameda Jr/St High School, a Jeffco public school, hosts regular meetings with families. During the 2018-19 school year, the two Family Engagement Liaisons asked families about their greatest concerns regarding their children’s success, both academically and behaviorally. Alameda families overwhelmingly identified the need to focus on improving the mental health of both students and families. The two liaisons, along with families, identified a group of professional partners with whom to work. In addition to mental health, Alameda staff also provided information about life after high school. The goal of the monthly meetings was to enrich Alameda families with knowledge so that they can better support their children outside of school.

Multiple staff, families, and community partners lead the meeting discussions. Topics of the meetings included:

Social Emotional Learning—guest speaker Jaime Brenner focused on anxiety, depression, bullying, and self-esteem. Parents shared personal information and genuine concern in regards to these real life challenges that students face daily.

Gear Up—Craig Pena and Desaire Wheeler discussed student support beyond high school. They provided information about transition to college, including how to apply for college, undocumented college support, FAFSA, trade school information, and existing scholarships and grants. This service helped parents understand the process of college applications and how they can support their college student goals for student success.

Health—Rosa Nunez, a parent leader at Alameda, introduced the Family Engagement Liaisons to Gina Millan. Gina comes from the same background and has experienced many of the same issues as Alameda parents. She shared how parents can talk to their children about sex, drugs, and how to approach the topics according to their age.

Families who attend these meetings were consistent and actively participated in the discussions. Their attendance and feedback indicated that these classes made a difference in their lives and the lives of the children.

One participant commented: “Working with our Family Liaisons and several mothers of current Alameda students this year was a special and unforgettable experience. I learned so much from the strength they exhibit daily due to life experiences they, and sometimes their children, endure. It was evident each month that their strength and resilience grew, and with this was the desire to create the best life possible for their family. Together we talked about significant issues impacting their children and how to best support and connect with them. I look forward to talking more with them in the years to come.”

Site-Based Extra-Duty Contracts

Thompson School District

Loveland, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Thompson School District (TSD) strives to increase partnerships between schools and families. To accomplish this, TSD employs three district family engagement specialists that support multiple Title I schools on a part-time basis. At each Title I school, TSD also now offers an extra-duty contract for building educators identified to act as additional site-based family engagement liaisons. This approach maximizes funding, builds capacity of additional TSD educators, and ensure consistent, site-based support for Family-School-Community Partnering (FSCP) initiatives.

Site-based family engagement liaisons work closely with building administrators and district family engagement specialists to support universal and targeted activities that increase student growth and achievement, empower families, improve communication and relationships, and contribute to a positive, collaborative school culture. This program capitalizes on the relationships already in place between school-based staff and families, and is a low-cost, high-impact strategy for increasing stakeholder engagement in our schools.

Site-based FSCP liaisons are selected by building administrators and trained to work with families and staff to develop and implement FSCP strategies at the school. Responsibilities include planning/facilitating training to help families support student learning at home, working with school staff to develop/implement family engagement programs and events, providing school staff with current research and coaching on promising practices in family engagement, administering family surveys to evaluate effectiveness of the school's family engagement policy and activities, and attending/leading professional development in the area of FSCP. These activities support positive student growth and achievement by engaging families in the educational process and building engagement capacity at the school site. Each site-based liaison receives training and an extra-duty contract for 2 additional hours/week devoted to FSCP activities and planning. They also sit on the district FSCP team, a multi-disciplinary team that leads district-wide programming and training in FSCP.

To evaluate effectiveness and impact, Title I schools track progress toward FSCP goals and implementation benchmarks using CDE's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Family, School and Community Partnering Practice Profile, and Supports Checklists. Implementation challenges have included high staff turnover and limited access to bilingual staff at some schools. We use a selection process to identify candidates who not only have a passion and skillset for the work, but also some longevity in the district and preferably, fluency in other languages.

District Family School and Community Partnering Specialist Michelle Myers, explains what the program means to her, the schools and the district, "At the core of FSCP practices, it's all about the relationships you cultivate with families, staff and the community, and without those relationships, you have nothing."

Special Dessert

Coronado Hills Elementary School
Thornton, CO



The special dessert practice at Coronado Hills Elementary was started as a way to continuously motivate students to become role models for others and themselves. Coronado focuses on the following characteristics that promote positive attitudes: Appreciation, Enthusiasm, Confidence, Commitment, Empathy, Tolerance, Cooperation, Creativity, Curiosity, Integrity, Independence, and Respect. Students are given the opportunity to earn “green tickets” that are placed in grade level mason jars. When a student is recognized for demonstrating one of these or several characteristics, they earn the right to a green ticket. Towards the latter half of the month, the family liaison randomly chooses two tickets from each Mason jar per class in each grade level to attend the special dessert held once per month. Each teacher also has the opportunity to choose one more student, and the three students per class are recognized for the month to enjoy a dessert.

The Positive Attitude with Support (PAWS) committee, which consists of teachers and staff, decides what the theme of the month will be for special dessert. They choose a destination or place in the world that students can be educated on regarding culture, traditions, language, lifestyle, etc. The family liaison is responsible for researching the destination and creating a collage that highlights the features of the country or state chosen.

Personalized invitations are created so that the principal may deliver them to each student who has been invited to be part of the celebration for exhibiting positive characteristics. Parents are also invited to enjoy this special dessert with their children. Part of the preparation for the event involves a group of parents known as “Las Comadres” at Coronado Hills that create the centerpieces and decorations for the celebration. This group takes charge of setting up the lobby for the monthly event, serving the dessert, and clean up.

On the actual day of the celebration, the family liaison delivers the presentation about the chosen destination, complete with a collage and props. A period of time is given to the group for questions and answers. The presentation is repeated every 20 minutes for the benefit of all grade levels. One example of a destination was Italy. The liaison focused on various Italian monuments throughout the country. The desserts chosen highlighted the traditional baked goods of panettone and pizzelles. The center pieces were a trifold replica of the Leaning Tower of Pisa and the Colosseum of Rome.

Although there is not a formal evaluation process for Special Dessert, Coronado has observed that the practice has made a lasting impression on students, parents, and staff. Students are motivated and work hard to earn the green tickets. Parents and staff have come together as a community and mentioned on many occasions how much they love the entire event that is special to their students and families.

For other schools who might be considering adopting this practice, it may be best to form an organized group of staff and parents to put all of the details together. Choose interesting places with rich history and unique features. Most of all, enjoy the process and the community engagement that is formed when parents are welcomed and given a mission with purpose linked to academics.

STEAM Access and Exposure for DLC Students

Elkhart Elementary School

Aurora, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

One of Elkhart Elementary School's priorities is to provide college and career access and exposure opportunities to every student and family. Over the last three years, college and career access and exposure opportunities have been provided internally and externally for Elkhart students and families, mainly focused in the field of STEAM. Representation of people of color and women in the STEAM field are disproportionate to those of whites and men. Students of color and female students having an understanding of STEAM and the breadth of career opportunities in the area can have short and long-term impacts for students of color and women.

For the 2018-19 school year, Elkhart's Diversity Learning Center (DLC) students were included in the STEAM learning experiences. Students in the DLC programs learn differently and are sometimes not included in college and career access and exposure opportunities. As stated by Aurora Public Schools' (APS) Exceptional Student Services Department: "It is imperative that each student with a disability be held to high expectations and provided with unique supports from all stakeholders while addressing the social-emotional, adaptive, and academic needs in order to shape a successful future."

The Family Liaison, College and Career Success Coordinator, and classroom teachers coordinated three STEAM learning experiences for the students: Mad Science of Colorado, Denver Zoo, and the 4H program. The classroom teachers were interested in learning opportunities to enhance their science curriculum. Each in-house field experience was in support of that goal.

The Mad Science of Colorado Eye to Eye program offered students a chance to explore their sense of sight, experimenting with magnifying glasses, kaleidoscopes, binoculars, and other optical illusions. The Denver Zoo Back to Nature program allowed students to use their senses to explore and play in nature, through observation of live zoo animals in their own schoolyard. The 4H Youth Development program focuses on the heart, hands, head, and health. The Food Fun program concentrated on healthy eating, with the students understanding the functions of different fruits and vegetables for the body.

As part of parent outreach and engagement in their students' learning, parents and families were invited to participate in the in-house field experience. Review and feedback from the students and teachers was given to the Family Liaison and the College and Career Success Coordinator to discuss if the program was beneficial for students, or if another experience should be provided in the future.

One of the main challenges for this type of school and district systematic programming is funding for Title 1 schools. The school uses Title 1 and/or school funding to support in this programming. With any school-wide programming, having administrator support and buy-in is critical. Elkhart has been a performance school for the last six years and the school administrator is very supportive of internal and external experiential learning experiences for all students in the school.

Standard 3—Supporting Student Success

Trans-disciplinary Play Based Assessment

Cherry Creek Schools' Child Find

Greenwood Village, CO



Cherry Creek Schools' Child Find (CCCF) completes approximately forty evaluations of children per week that are between the ages of birth to six years old. Staff found limitations in using standardized testing for young children with diverse backgrounds and varying developmental levels. An area for improvement was a systematic and naturalistic way for families to meaningfully inform their child's evaluation. As a result, the district began implementing Trans-disciplinary Play Based Assessment-2 (TPBA-2) after determining it to be a flexible authentic assessment tool that would allow staff to evaluate children inclusive of a thick and rich description of the child from his or her family.

Although some members of CCCF had received introductory training to TPBA-2 in past years, the district was not implementing TPBA-2 practices with fidelity. A commitment was made by the district three years ago to train all child find staff in TPBA-2 and begin the certification process. The training has included play facilitation and parent facilitation. Cherry Creek Child Find also participated in CDE TPBA-2 Cadre for the past two years and now has two certified TPBA-2 parent facilitators.

TPBA-2 includes evaluation across four developmental domains—sensorimotor, emotional and social, communication, and cognitive. The parent facilitator observes the child's play alongside the parent(s), asking questions of the parents about how what is being observed across all four domains coincides with their home-life, and oftentimes include the parents in the play. The parent facilitator not only keeps the family informed about what's occurring during the assessment but also ensures the information they provide informs the team of the child's overall development. Families are empowered to describe their child's needs, but even more so their strengths, to inform eligibility and individualized program development. TPBA-2 directly links assessment and intervention, hence parents also inform classroom interventions. It is also aligned with Division of Early Childhood and National Association for the Education of Young Children guidelines for family engagement.

CCCF evaluated our TPBA-2 practice through both formal and informal measures. We implemented a year-TPBA-2 book study, which included reviewing case studies and each member evaluating their own TPBA practice. We also completed coach and peer observations during child find evaluations. Subsequently, beyond our certified parent facilitators, we were able to get two staff members to TPBA-2 Coach Certification and are working toward becoming a Certified TPBA-2 training site next year. This will help ensure we can sustain this practice and train and certify more parent facilitators.

We are seeing positive outcomes implementing TPBA-2 practices. Parents are reporting more positive experiences with evaluation teams getting a "true picture" of their child. Evaluators are able to gain much more evaluation information to determine eligibility and create meaningful individual plans for children, as a result of the information provided by families. For other districts wanting to implement true authentic assessment with young children, inclusive of their families, TPBA-2 is the best tool.

Standard 3—Supporting Student Success

Dual Language Festival

Lumberg Elementary School

Edgewater, CO



Lumberg Elementary is a Title Expeditionary Learning (EL) Education school with a one way Dual Language program. We celebrated our fourth annual Spring Festival this year with great enthusiasm. Lumberg's Dual Language families poured into the school on March 21st to enjoy an evening of new literacy activities with their children. Families integrated their native Spanish language backgrounds with literacy experiences in this event with the theme *Festival cruzando puentes a través de la lectura* (Festival Crossing Bridges through Reading).



The Festival combined exploring new literacy approaches with sharing flavorful tostadas brimming over with tasty toppings which all families contributed to. Lumberg's Dual Language instructional coach and classroom teachers shared easy ways for every family to build capacity to support student success at home. Each family practiced multiple literacy activities in both Spanish and English.

After attending the event, families felt stronger in their understanding of the literacy activities they can work together on to enrich their students' learning. The activities also invited conversations that explored meaning as it related to their diverse experiences.

Lumberg's Dual Language program has families representing México, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. Conversations among our families expanded to their different journeys as newcomers. Several families in the school are very recent arrivals to the United States, and others have lived in the United States for a few years. Staff observed how this shared newcomer experience added an additional layer of meaning to our family literacy night.

Anecdotally, the dual language festival was a huge success. Parents and caregivers engaged in a fun way with their students while learning about literacy activities in their native language and selected books to take home. Schools will succeed in leveraging the educational goals of their students with meaningful activities that highlight the family's role in literacy acquisition. This celebration was indeed very special as it deepened the shared experience of our students and families of their school life as dual language learners within an EL Education.



Five Star Leadership Academy

Adams 12 Five Star Schools

Thornton, CO



Adams 12 Five Star Schools in Thornton has more than 39,000 students and 50 school sites in five cities and two counties with a population that is more than 40 percent Hispanic and nearly 40 percent qualified for free and reduced meal benefits. How can a large and diverse district engage parents and community members in a meaningful way?



The goal of the Five Star Leadership Academy is to empower members to learn about and become involved in local, district and state education, and to take on future leadership roles within a school, the district, or community. The district achieves this goal by building groups of ambassadors who: Know What (knowledge of district and public education policies, actions and works); Know Who (personal relationships with school administrators and staff, elected officials and other parents and community members); and Know How (healthy public participation with an increased knowledge of navigating "wicked" problems and engaging with differing opinions).

The vision of the Five Star Leadership Academy began after the 2014 election where the district lost both mill levy override and bond funding initiatives with 60 percent of the community voting no. This election left the district without a passed funding measure since 2008. The outcomes conveyed a strong message that the community was not aware of district needs and did not have a voice in the solutions. The superintendent and communications director initiated a group that would begin to address these issues. They hired an engagement specialist to lead it and district staff members were consulted to be guest speakers and provide content expertise.



Every year, Adams 12 requests applications in May for the following fall from parents and community members. The group meets September to May, one Friday a month, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Each month, a different topic is discussed - from finance to governance, curriculum to safety. Since the start of the Academy, the district has passed a bond in 2016 (more than 60 percent yes) and a mill levy override in 2018 (56 percent yes), which district staff believe is due in part to building district ambassadors (now at over 240 graduates). In addition, participants are continuing their influence in the

district with graduates representing more than 70 percent of the District-wide Accountability Committee membership.

Beyond the programming to help participants learn the ins and outs of public education, building relationships is key. Get to know the participants, learn from one another, and help them become even better ambassadors for your district. It takes patience but is essential.



Standard 4—Speaking Up for Every Child

Involving Families in IEP/IFSP Goals

University of Denver

Denver, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Students in the in the Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and Child, Family, and School Psychology (CFSP) programs at the University of Denver are required to complete the Preschool Interventions and Infant and Family Interventions courses. Both courses include an assignment called Writing functional Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) outcomes.

This assignment is aligned with the ECSE Specialist and School Psychology licensure standards and the DEC Recommended Practices from the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children. The goal of this assignment is to emphasize the critical involvement of families and the legal responsibility school staff have in the IEP/IFSP process. At the end of this assignment, students will understand the importance of collaboration with families and interdisciplinary teams in writing IEP/IFSP goals.

This is an important assignment and skill for students in these fields because understanding how IEP/IFSP goals are developed with the family leads to better outcomes for young children with disabilities. The “functional” part of the assignment is salient because, in practice, many IEP/IFSP goals are not written with a functional or applicable intent, rather, they are written based on the missed items of the assessment that was administered to the child and without input or collaboration with the family. Functional IEP/IFSP goals should be developed with the family and the whole IEP team based on the child’s current levels of functioning, the family’s priorities, and the child’s next developmental steps.

The content of this assignment is introduced during the class through lecture and discussion. The course professor uses a resource from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance ([ECTA](#)) Center. During the class, the criteria for writing functional IEP/IFSP goals is introduced and practiced.

Students also view videos of parents discussing their role in the IEP process, and read texts and articles about collaborating with families to develop IEP/IFSP goals. During the practice of the skill, students work in pairs to identify if previously written goals/outcomes reflect all the criteria. Then, students discuss in a larger group if the criteria were met or not and the rationale.

Students also practice writing IEP/IFSP goals for the children they are working with at their practicum sites or field examples that the professor created. The class dissects the practice goals/outcomes together so that they can discuss the criteria and how the goal/outcome can be re-written. Emphasis is made on collaborating with families on the development of the IEP/IFSP goals and the belief that parents know their child best and teachers and specialist know overall child development and the IEP/IFSP process.

Upon evaluation, students write functional IEP/IFSP goals with less jargon and more thoughtfulness of working with families to create the functional goals. Past and present students have reported that this activity and assignment was valuable to their learning and greatly helped their practice in writing IEP/IFSP goals with families and interdisciplinary teams.

Standard 4—Speaking Up for Every Child

Latino Parent Advisory Council

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



Boulder Valley School District's (BVSD) superintendent and Office of Family Partnerships launched the Latino Parent Advisory Council (CAPL in Spanish) to facilitate deeper dialogue between Boulder County's community of Latino parents and the school district. It is a valuable forum for traditionally under-represented voices to provide their input, seek out information that supports their advocacy, and holds BVSD accountable to making positive changes.

To design the new council, BVSD staff gathered a small working group that contained Latino parents, a community leader, and a representative from the district's English Language Development department. The team engaged school principals in sending out information about how parents could apply to join the council.

The Latino Parent Advisory Council met with the superintendent every six to eight weeks throughout the 2018-19 school year. The gatherings were co-facilitated by the Director of Family Partnerships, an elementary principal, and a high school assistant principal. The meetings typically had 20-30 parents in attendance across the PK-12 spectrum.

The superintendent was always an enthusiastic and supportive presence. Meeting facilitators spent several hours designing the agenda for each meeting to ensure that the sessions were engaging and meaningful. Parents shared valuable insights, requested data that was informative for all involved, and offered feedback that continues to inform our efforts to bridge our achievement gap and build stronger ties with Latino families across all of our schools. BVSD staff engaged them as a group in both our Equity Summit and our strategic planning community input sessions

District staff met a few times throughout the year with some members of the council to listen to their feedback on how to improve both the structure of our meetings and increase turn-out. One key takeaway was that more communication via text or phone between meetings will be crucial moving forward, and that email messages are insufficient. Committee members also recommended that in order to maintain momentum, meetings should happen on a consistent and predictable schedule. The aim moving forward is to identify a few parent leaders to help co-facilitate future sessions.

The council continues to be a vital advisory group to guide multiple layers of district work with students and families. As one participant put it, "Thank you for organizing the council to improve the inclusion, communication, and support for the second largest population of families in our district..."

PARITY Parent Leadership

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

The long-range goal of the PARITY (Parents Advocating Responsibility in the Interest of Their Youngsters) parent training is to reduce the achievement and graduation gaps that exist between Latinx and Anglo students. The overall intent of the PARITY training program is to transform how immigrant Spanish speaking parents see their role as advocates for their children’s educational success. Because they are relatively new to school systems in the U.S., they shy away from being involved in the schools/District. The PARITY curriculum is strongly influenced by multiple studies that demonstrate the positive educational impact that parents have on their children’s educational success.

The PARITY Parent Leadership program, which was developed by CARE, has been one of the parent development practices used by Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) since 2012. The PARITY practice was initiated by a collaboration between CARE consultants and the Director of the Equity office in BVSD. Because of the success of the collaboration, and the positive impact on Spanish speaking parents, BVSD has now increased the frequency of PARITY training programs to three times per year at the elementary and secondary levels.

The PARITY training is provided to 15-25 Spanish speaking parents in seven sessions. The PARITY classes are conducted for three hours each Saturday morning for seven consecutive weeks in fall, winter, and spring. New parents are recruited by BVSD and CARE for each class. BVSD provides childcare, food, training materials, and consultant/facilitation fees. The program topics include how educational systems operate, parents’ rights/responsibilities, multiple intelligences, advocacy strategies, communication, and personal power (among other topics). The PARITY training sessions are circular, with a strong emphasis on dialogue. The intent is for parents to become “transformed”, not merely “informed”. A special session is conducted with administrators and board of education members for parents to ask questions and become familiar with district personnel. Because of BVSD’s commitment to parent training, the relationship and trust factor between Spanish speaking parents and school/district personnel has increased enormously.

The PARITY training has been evaluated through pre- and post- surveys to determine the baseline and change-over-time advocacy behavior of the parents. Following each session, the parents also identify what they have learned and how they will use that learning to advocate for their children. To date, approximately 180 parents have participated in the PARITY program affecting over 350 students. An effects study with the students has yet to be accomplished. The biggest challenge is the recruitment of parents to attend PARITY, partly because many parents work on Saturdays.

“Our district has continued to deepen our partnership with PARITY because of its dynamic and transformative impact on our Latinx parents,” commented Ari Gerzon-Kessler, BVSD Director of Family Partnerships. “It is led with passion and thoughtfulness and our participants quickly translate their learning into positive action on behalf of their children and our schools.”

Standard 4—Speaking Up for Every Child

Setting Goals with Parent Data

Mountain View Elementary School

Longmont, CO



“When a team of individuals share the belief that through their unified efforts they can overcome challenges and produce intended results, groups *are* more effective” (Donohoo, Hattie & Eells, 2018).



John Hattie and other education researchers have described the power of collective efficacy in the school setting: when groups of teachers believe in each other, plan together, and measure their impact, instruction and student achievement improve. This same concept can be applied to parent and family engagement. When a parent leadership team collaborates, sets goals, and measures their collective impact, family and community engagement and home-to-school communication will improve.

The Parent Leadership Team at Mountain View Elementary School in the St. Vrain Valley School District has seen this in action. In order to have a positive impact, the parents and staff on this team agreed that they should first assess the needs of the school’s parents and families. After conducting dozens of parent interviews, the team decided to develop a parent survey to get a broader response. The team worked through the following steps to develop this practice:

- **Getting clear about the purpose of your parent survey.** What information is needed in order to set goals, prioritize action steps and measure impact?
- **Writing three to five survey questions aligned to the purpose.** The more you ask, the more data you have to analyze. You can assess needs in as few as three questions.
- **Utilizing Google Forms or other digital platforms.** The use of technology to collect and tally results allows for accessible analysis and visualization. Google Forms can create charts and graphs that you can copy and paste into a report.
- **Being strategic when administering the survey.** A quick digital survey can be administered at parent-teacher conferences or a back-to-school night. Create a QR code so that parents can access the survey (in their primary language) on their smartphones, or have digital devices ready for parent to access.

With survey data from over 50% of the families, the team was able to assess the need and prioritize goals. The data indicated a need of families to better understand their children’s academics. As a result, the Parent Leadership Team organized monthly events for parents to visit with their child’s teacher in a group setting to learn about key academic skills.

Standard 4—Speaking Up for Every Child

Families and Educators Together (FET) Team

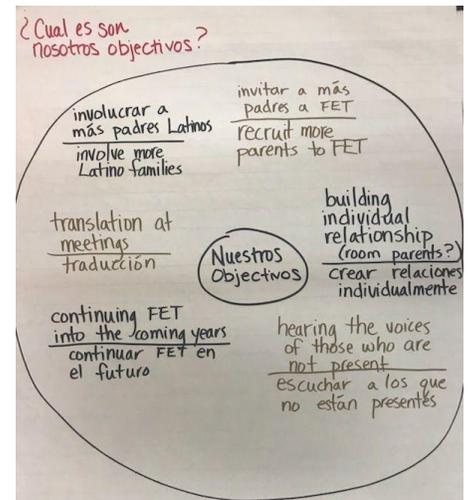
Whittier International Elementary School

Boulder, CO



In recent years, Boulder Valley School District began implementing a Families and Educators Together in Schools project in which different schools piloted FET Teams to develop deeper, more authentic relationships between parents and educators. In the 2018-2019 school year, the staff and parents at Whittier transformed the staff-based Parent Involvement Committee into the Families and Educators Together Committee (FET).

The committee was co-chaired by one parent and one teacher and was made up of four additional staff members and eight additional parents. From the on-set of implementation, the co-chairs were supported and received training from the district's Director of Family Partnerships and met bi-monthly with other co-chairs from other FET Teams in the district. The principal of the school, and the Family Resource Schools program coordinator were key supporters in recruiting parents to the committee and supporting our work in the initial year.



In the inaugural year, the FET team focused on (1) recruiting parents from our minority communities to attend meetings and (2) developing a strong foundation of relationships with those parents so they felt confident and comfortable in openly sharing their ideas and opinions around school improvement. In the first months, we developed committee values and expectations, and more importantly created space for staff and parent members to connect through *dinámicas*, collaborative activities to promote trust and cohesion within the group.

FET's goals became three-fold: in the short term, to have staff expand their methods of communication to be more inclusive through experimenting with the use of translated texts, phone calls home and home-school journals; in the long term, to vertically align the way in which teachers communicate with families; and finally, finding ways to better connect parents of different backgrounds with one-another.

Evaluation of Whittier's work was largely based on feedback from the district director, our committee members, school staff, and other FET teams in the district. Takeaways included:

- Don't be afraid to start slow, building a foundation of trust before rushing into projects.
- Put the voices of the parents first and create ways for all voices to be heard in meetings.
- Parent involvement isn't about creating events for parents to attend, but rather finding authentic ways for parents to comfortably and regularly express their thoughts and opinions with school staff.

Family Partnership Network

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



The Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) Family Partnership Network is centered on cultivating family partnership champions at every school, and providing a forum for them to learn about effective practices from other participants and receive meaningful professional development in the areas of family partnerships and equity.

The Office of Family Partnerships designs the agendas for these two and a half hour sessions that take place quarterly and consist of one or two representatives from each school, who are typically school counselors or community liaisons.

In these sessions, BVSD staff hosts panels, share new research on family partnership best practices, create meaningful ways for participants to collaborate with others in their feeder system, lead representatives to set goals, and reflect on their successes and challenges. They learn a lot from each other and from presenters, and they develop clear action plans for their school's Family Partnership efforts.

Attendees also complete a family partnerships self-assessment that BVSD created in partnership with CU-Boulder that guides their awareness of strengths and areas for growth. At the end of each gathering, participants have time to email their principals to summarize their learning, share their progress, and inquire about setting up a short meeting to discuss next steps.

At the conclusion of each Family Partnership Network meeting, participants provide feedback, which helps to guide future meetings. The greatest challenge district staff have faced is around how to follow up with the representatives/schools that are consistently absent. One other challenge is figuring how to differentiate some of the content so that it is relevant to both community liaisons and school counselors.

For other districts interested in developing something similar to the FPN, BVSD's Director of Parent and Family Partnerships offers: "it will help if you develop a compelling message that increased the likelihood of strong principal buy-in. Make sure that the representatives are individuals that have a passion for strengthening partnerships with families and were not simply assigned by their principal to attend. It helped us last year to give representatives a menu of potential areas of focus based on high leverage partnership practices. It is also an effective strategy to share resources and communicate with representatives between meetings via email or a platform such as Schoology. This network is steadily helping us to spread best practices system wide."

Family Survey and Programing

Evans International Elementary School

Colorado Springs, CO



A necessary starting point for any partnership is to make sure that all individuals are on the same page. This year, Evans International Elementary School sought to strengthen family partnerships by comparing perceived family needs to actual recorded family needs, before then rolling out a new plan to engage families.

Prior to attending parent-teacher conferences, school personnel asked families to fill out a survey in exchange for a raffle ticket. Over 100 families completed the survey. School staff collected and calculated the survey results, with a twist. Prior to the release of the results, school teachers and administration were asked to guess what they believed the top three reported family wants/needs that the survey showed.

Evans' Family Engagement Liaison shared the results at a monthly staff meeting, including the gaps in perceived versus actual family answers. Based on research and the information gathered in the survey, a ten-week program was then rolled out to begin meeting the desires of families prior to the end of the school year.

Each Monday of the ten-week program, teachers were provided information about a task and asked to make minor changes to something they were already doing to better engage with families. Weekly raffles for various prizes from community partners were held for teachers who participated. An example of a weekly roll out is below:

"Can you participate in the past?"

This was a question Dr. Steve Constantino posed at a recent Title I family engagement conference.

"Then are we engaging families when we simply inform them about what has already occurred in our classrooms?"

Dr. Constantino went on to offer this simple suggestion to increase family engagement, 'Adjust something you are already doing to focus on the future instead of the past.'

To be entered in the raffle, send something present/future oriented home in your student folders or via DOJO. Give parents a way to engage in the coming week with their kids rather than having the focus be on the past. Examples are attached."

At the end of the school year, students brought home learning games to play over the summer. Over 77% of parents who completed the survey requested this resource. During the final weeks of school, each teacher made games with their students in class that the students then took home to continue practicing and playing over the summer. This program engaged families in a targeted way while getting teachers talking about and excited for new ways of partnering with families. Most importantly, this ongoing partnering initiative originated directly from the wants and needs of Evans' families.

Growing FSCP with MTSS

Weld County School District Re-3J

Keenesburg, CO



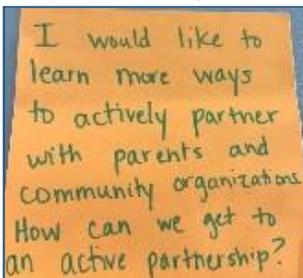
Across the communities of Hudson, Keenesburg, Lochbuie, and Roggen, the Weld County School District Re-3J serves just over 2,500 students in grades PK-12. As a member of the Colorado State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) project, the district has been working on implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). The MTSS Leadership Team (MLT) in Re-3J includes representatives from each of the district schools. In addition to monthly whole-group meetings supported by Colorado Department of Education (CDE) staff, three sub-committees meet regularly regarding prioritized topics. The MLT collaboratively plans and creates capacity-building materials and activities.



Last year, MTSS Building Leadership Teams (BLTs) began learning about each of the CO-MTSS Components through a CDE training series. As their competency developed, the MLT and BLTs continued to uncover opportunities for growth. One of the five Essential Components of the CO-MTSS framework is Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP). The MLT and each BLT has evaluated its performance in FSCP each year. Identifying FSCP as an area to improve, the MLT crafted personnel development and action planning approaches that included a more-intentional focus on FSCP.

Along with CDE support, an offering of training around Multi-Tiered FSCP was established for district personnel. Each school had MLT members attend a day-long training that emphasized the “shift from parent involvement to family partnering”, along with how to model, lead, and implement FSCP within their school sites. There was a focus on the National Standards for Family-School Partnership (PTA, 2008), the Dual-Capacity Building Framework (ED, 2013), and CO-MTSS FSCP resources.

During the session, each school evaluated their implementation with the FSCP indicators of the CO-MTSS BLT Self-Assessment. Participants are encouraged to be FSCP “content leads” within their BLTs and facilitate ongoing monitoring of FSCP. Several measures and tools (e.g., Staff Self-Reflection Tool, CO-MTSS FSCP Practice Profile) were reviewed for school-level use.



Session participants described their Personal Purposes for attendance, and throughout the training shared strategies with each other. The “Why, What, and How” of FSCP were key features. At its conclusion, attendees commented on stakeholder partnering, acknowledging the importance of: effective (two-way) communication, (authentic) relationship-building, and connecting FSCP to student learning.

Partnership Badges

Jeffco Public Schools

Golden, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

In the true spirit of *families leading family engagement*, a focus group of Family School Partnership (FSP) members met at the end of the 2017-18 school year to help vision Jeffco Public Schools' family engagement journey for the 2018-2019 school year. At that meeting, families made the connection between the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and the number of meetings set for the upcoming year. This led to ideas and conversation about how to elevate the importance of each standard and even more importantly, how to implement the standards on a deeper level in their schools.

One participant posed the question: *"What would it look like if schools 'earned their badge' in one or more of the 6 National Standards?"* Focus group members all felt like they were onto something that gave enough voice and choice to schools, but also allowed for cross-district collaboration. Group members also knew that the year's work would accentuate the reality that meaningful family engagement is a *process* not a single event.

With a plan taking shape, staff launched the idea to a district group in October 2018 using a cycle graphic to illustrate the year ahead. Families could see there was a plan, and soon they would be drafting similar plans with their school team! At this first meeting, the group re-grounded themselves in the 'why' and had families revisit the National Standards with an opportunity to weigh in on what it looks like, feels like, and sounds like in their buildings.

As the year progressed, FSP teams used district family survey, on-site self-assessments, and anecdotal data to help decipher which of the National Standards they could improve and take to a deeper level. Once schools made an informed decision, they got to work creating action steps. Teams also decided how their journey would be measured and archived; what body of evidence would they collect to show their process, progress, and success. Schools clustered in groups based on which 'badge' they were earning, to share ideas and work through struggles.

Mid-year, the district FSP team knew it would be important to shift thinking from a 'finished product' to instead 'celebrating the journey.' Staff wanted to be sure that schools avoided the 'one and done' mentality. Staff also want to be sure that any school that eventually 'earns a badge' has the work to show for it. This level of implementation can only truly happen when all stakeholders - staff, families, students, leadership - work together toward a shared goal.

At Jeffco's year-end celebration, families presented their school's roadmap to earning their badge, which they will launch in the 2019-2020 school year. Jeffco's family engagement journey continues, and they anticipate that by the end of the 2019-20 school year, many schools will be awarded badges in one of the National Standards! With dedication over several years, staff anticipate that schools who have earned all six National Standard badges will earn the privilege to be deemed a Partnership School.

Sharing Power at Emory Elementary

Emory Elementary School
Lakewood, CO



Emory Elementary School’s 2018-19 Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) states that “Family Engagement will be supported by linking family involvement activities to learning.” In order to support the UIP, the Title I Family School Partnership (FSP) representatives at Emory and their Family Liaison, talked to the school principal and other families, and decided that the best way to support activities that are linked to learning at the school was by “promoting shared power with our families.”



The Family Engagement Liaison, two FSP representatives, school principal, and families of the Family Engagement Team (FET) met once a month at different times to assess and plan how to best support sharing power. The team developed an initial 3 step plan: 1) to prepare staff to embrace a culture of shared power with families, 2) to better structure meetings with families and 3) to facilitate the creation of agendas for each FET meeting.

Staff and family buy-in were key to the success of Emory’s practice. The Family Engagement Liaison and a parent representative presented about family engagement and sharing power to Emory staff during a professional development day. Emory staff also took a pre and post survey to gauge the depth of knowledge about family engagement and readiness to share power.

The Family Engagement Liaison also worked to increase parent buy-in. Staff listened to the need to have more voices in the room during FET meetings. In response, school staff created two different meetings to accommodate the need. Collaboratively, FET meetings became more structured, and agendas for the next meeting were decided well in advance.

Because of these meeting changes, Emory has seen a ripple effect in staff and families working together; all it takes is a few families and teachers to start paving the way to openly practice sharing power. Families who might typically be comfortable on the sidelines, have now taken notice and feel more empowered to try something new, share an idea, or venture into something they have not done before.

To replicate Emory’s journey, consider facilitating conversations in the school community. Ask, “How do you define sharing power? What does it look like? How does it make you feel?” Once you have the collective vision, you can commit to making it a reality. As a final and bonus point, this initiative is an ongoing practice and did not take any ‘extra money or resources’, just a shift in our school culture, practice and belief in families.



Slater University Workshops

Slater Elementary School

Lakewood, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Slater Elementary School teachers and staff partnered to create family workshops called Slater University. The goal of the university is to have families, students, and school community more engaged in learning. The hope is that by providing these workshops throughout the school year, families will feel empowered to support their children’s learning outside of school. Slater held the first workshop in May 2019 and will provide more during the 2019-20 school year based on the needs and wants of students and their families.

Slater University started the workshops with a free dinner and icebreaker game. The first workshops focused on time management and healthy eating. They helped families learn ways to create healthy family meals, spend quality time together, and use time management for a successful, engaging summer schedule. Families created color-coded calendars and came up with easy visual ideas for their children to help with everyday chores. A few other topics staff focused on were ways to help save money while grocery shopping and ideas for summer activities linked to learning.

At the end of each workshop, families completed a survey asking for helpful feedback, such as ways to improve. The survey always ends with the question, “What topics would you like to see presented at the next workshop?” Knowing what their families need help and support with is important! One family said, “Feeling supported by staff and being able to talk with others and get ideas from one another was so helpful!”

Families who returned fully-completed surveys were entered to win a year membership to the zoo and nature and science museum. Slater families were so positively impacted that they requested the workshops happen monthly next school year.



The Slater community is encouraged to work together to help celebrate individual student success with phone calls home, as well as when coming together again at Slater University Workshops. They know they have reached their goals if families, students, and the broader community are both seeing an increase in engagement and participation at school and at home. Staff will always share progress with their families.

Slater’s Family Engagement Liaison hopes to empower families by creating helpful workshops as a community to help break barriers to improve student success! She offers the following advice for schools interested in replicating the workshops: “Food and icebreakers are a great incentive to get families together and bond with each other. Have any children who attend workshops be given the choice to actively attend the workshops or choose an activity provided to ensure families are able to fully grasp and benefit all helpful information given.”

Allies Supporting Latinx Families

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



Boulder Valley School District's (BVSD) Office of Family Partnerships works hard to ensure every family has a voice in their children's education. One way to accomplish this goal is to host an event called Family Partnership Allies Supporting Latinx Families. The aim of this event was to connect and foster greater synergy between all of the district's community partners that serve Latinx students and families. In addition to building their awareness of ally organizations working in the same field, BVSD also set the goal of creating a collective, shared calendar which would enable everyone to better promote each other's offerings and ensure that partners are not unintentionally scheduling events on overlapping dates.

As a team working in the realms of equity and family partnerships, four partners planned the spring meeting. The planning team invited representatives from approximately fifteen organizations throughout our county.

Community partners and BVSD staff gathered for 90 minutes with more than a dozen representatives in attendance. Over lunch, they each had a few minutes to convey the mission of their organization, share some of the major projects that are relevant to Latinx families, and highlight any major upcoming events in the 2019-20 school year. During the second half of the meeting, BVSD staff provided them with time to network and enter all of their major offerings into a shared Google calendar. With coordinated calendars, staff and community partners are confident that more students and families will benefit from these opportunities if providers are promoting each other's efforts and learning from each organization's respective successes and challenges.

It was clear from the comments of participants that they greatly appreciated the chance to learn about each other's work and network. The planning committee only experienced two challenges in planning the event. The idea emerged late in the school year. In retrospect, it would have increased turn-out to have invited people to the event much farther in advance. The other challenge was trying not to exclude any relevant organization while at the same time maintain a narrow focus on those who work directly to support the learning and well-being of Latinx families.

This event was easy to plan and coordinate, and well worth the time invested. It helped that staff wrote a compelling invitation and the detailed meeting agenda mirrored district priorities for the meeting and included some time for informal connections. One participant called the event an "exciting opportunity" and another said it would help their organization "improve outreach efforts on connecting residents to community partners and the planning and coordination of events and programs."

Bridging Digital Divides

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



The Digital Divide Program is a response to the recognition that, as more resources and information become available exclusively online, members of communities that are not connected are falling behind. These communities tend to be comprised of low-income families, senior adults, and immigrant families with English language learners. The goal of the program is to get all Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) families online by the end of 2023. As part of an ongoing effort to narrow one of Colorado's widest achievement gaps between white and Latino students, BVSD has been implementing a 1: Web program. However, immigrant parents with limited formal education often feel unable to assist with homework completed in unfamiliar online formats and miss out on the opportunity to experience homework as a collaborative activity.

Partners in the collaborative include the local school district (BVSD), housing authorities, public libraries, city government, CU Boulder, Emergency Family Assistance Association (EFAA), Sister Carmen Community Center (SCCC), "I Have A Dream" of Boulder County (IHAD), and other organizations that focus on the support and integration of second language learners such as Intercambio and Boulder Family Literacy.

Boulder's digital literacy series consist of 8 weeks of two hour classes, in Spanish and English, covering the basics of email, internet search and security, scams and phishing, typing and word-processing, as well as navigating local online resources and tools such as Infinite Campus. Childcare and dinner are provided, and participants with perfect attendance take home a Chromebook (\$180 value) for only \$60 at the end of the course. BVSD also assists parents with access to home broadband internet either free through a partnership with Livewire, or through Comcast's discount program.

After the class, parents reported not only feeling more equipped to navigate online systems, such as Infinite Campus, but also expressed a budding confidence in their ability to learn on their own. Parents with strong online skills are more likely to feel comfortable assisting their children with digital learning assignments and are more likely to engage in home-school partnerships. Family-oriented, two-generation approaches to rolling out technologies are crucial to the success of such efforts.

In the pre-survey, only 9% of parents said they were 'very good' at email, that number increased to 49% in the post-survey. 47% did not use, or had never heard of the calendar app, by the post-survey 70% rated themselves satisfactory or above. 78% had never used Google Docs or Word at the start of the course, 83% said they could use it by the end of the class. Satisfaction with the course was very high, with 96% of participants requesting a Level II course.

Recommendations for schools wishing to implement this practice include utilizing cultural brokers for community outreach, allowing ample time for registration, committing to more than one cycle, and providing follow-up support for parents in terms of assistance with broadband internet subscriptions and on-going learning opportunities.

Standard 6—Collaborating with the Community

Coat Program

Peoria Elementary School

Aurora, CO



Peoria Elementary School is in Aurora Public Schools with a population of 480 students. About 90% of students receive free or reduced-price lunch. One goal at Peoria is to provide the best quality of education along with the tools for parents and community to support children outside of school. School staff ensure that every single one of our students feels comfortable and has what is necessary to have a successful education. In order to have a successful education and to have academic success, a student must have the essential food on their plate and proper clothes to wear.

During the 2018-19 school year, Peoria was chosen by Operation Warm and FedEx with to be provided a coat for each and every student. This program was a wonderful opportunity for students. Many of them wear coats that are too small or torn. Others do not have a coat at all. FedEx had an amazing team of volunteers to support this initiative.

Coats were delivered a few days before the coat distribution event. Volunteers came earlier that day to set everything up, organizing the coats by size and colors. When the time came for students to get their coats, volunteers welcomed them in to the gym with a big smile and even some hugs. Patiently, community volunteers made sure the coat was the right size and that the color was one chosen by the child.

There was even a Denver Bronco football player that volunteered his time for the school. Staff received such positive responses from students and their families. Having a warm and brand new coat meant so much to these students, putting some pretty big smiles on their faces. Peoria students are now better equipped to handle Colorado's roller coaster weather patterns!

Other than this event, Peoria provides resources all year that help families in need of food, clothes, shelter, and many other resources for any situation they might be having. Some families receive a bag of food to take home every Friday, and other families get bus passes to run errands and attend school-based events.

Peoria's Family Liaison states: "Evaluating the coat program, we came to determine it was such a successful event that all schools should have it at one point. Coming together as a community to help the school is the most rewarding feeling ever. This is only one of the many things our community and staff does to help our students have academic success and not having to worry about basic needs."

Community Cultural Wealth Quilt

University of Denver

Denver, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

University of Denver's Teacher Education Program (TEP) includes a course called Foundations of Education for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Learners. In the class, apprentice teachers (ATs) investigate and synthesize the funds of knowledge and assets of communities for their future teaching placements. In preparation for their placements, ATs compare their personal identities in relation to the communities' cultural wealth in the neighborhood or community of their future teaching placement.

Apprentice teachers spend 3-5 hours in the community of their host school and document the community cultural wealth through observation notes and informal interviews with 3-5 community members. Specifically, ATs gather information about the history of the neighborhood, challenges within the community, and sources of strength, resiliency, and pride for the community.

Teachers identify cultural wealth including the social, cultural, linguistic, and human capital present in the community. With this information, they create a visual representation of the community in a community cultural wealth that exemplifies the funds of knowledge found in the school's community. To connect cultural wealth with their future teaching experiences, ATs are asked to write five "I will" statements that reflect their orientations (e.g., beliefs, values, and intentions) for educating CLD Learners. For example, "I will honor the humanity of every child."

This practice is linked to the Framework for Effective and Equitable (FEET) competencies, the core competencies required for all teachers in our Teacher Education Program and the Colorado Department of Education CLD Endorsement Standards.

DU professors evaluate the community cultural wealth practice each year and seek to provide more opportunities to frame learning experiences critically. Professors also facilitate discussions and class activities that provide opportunities for students to develop critical consciousness or an understanding of their identities and under-served community's funds of knowledge within inequitable systems of power such as educational and healthcare systems.

For other Institutes of Higher Education wanting to replicate this course assignment, DU professors offer the following advice: "Investigations about community cultural wealth should be revisited in subsequent courses in conjunction with practices and activities that support the development of apprentice teachers' critical consciousness in relation to the communities they work and serve. Further, an apprentice teacher cannot assume that the school community will be located around the school. For example, some schools are experiencing gentrification, where students and communities are displaced, or students are bussed in to schools from other communities and neighborhoods. In cases where communities are displaced, ATs need to map the communities of the school from other locations."

Standard 6—Collaborating with the Community

Community Roundtables

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

The Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) values developing long term partnerships with community members and businesses. In order to highlight community resources, district staff organized a Community Roundtable. The overarching aim of this event is to build bridges between school counselors, community liaisons, teachers, and dozens of non-profit organizations that serve BVSD students and families. This event is an opportunity for educators to learn more about key partner organizations and to strengthen the relationships between them.

This event, which lasts for two and a half hours, is designed and coordinated by four major departments: family partnerships, mental health, early childhood education, and BVSD's McKinney-Vento coordinator.

The planning committee invited more than 25 partner organizations to present to educators in the areas of: Emergency Housing/Shelters; Food Security; Social and Emotional/Mental Health; Medicaid and County Health; Diverse Identities and Affinity Groups; Special Education; Adult Education & Career Services; Affordable Housing; Legal Services; and Community Health. In advance of the event, educators select the four areas that they would like to learn more about to determine the seating arrangements for all four sessions of roundtable conversations.

Each thematic area hosts a circle or roundtable in which a few representatives from these partner organizations deliver 2-3 minute elevator pitches providing an overview of how they serve students and families and then the remaining time is for our educators to ask them questions.

At the conclusion of the Community Roundtables morning, BVSD hosts a raffle and then ask both educators and community partners to provide feedback on all aspects of the event. The primary challenges in coordinating the event are securing a large enough space (the team has used a community church the past two years) and soliciting the thematic preferences of all participants.

Community Roundtable organizers spend 10-20 hours in the fall collaborating to prepare this event. Being proactive and clear in our communication with all stakeholders makes the event run smoothly and ensure it is beneficial for everyone. At the end of the event, educators are encouraged to think about two or three agencies that they want to prioritize deepening their relationships with on behalf of students and families. This event is invaluable because it sparks learning, forges connections, and leads BVSD students and families to access more of the resources within our community.

Family Game Night at the Library

Thompson Integrated Early Childhood Program

Loveland, CO



The Thompson Integrated Early Childhood Program in Loveland serves over 600 preschool-aged children at 13 sites in the Thompson School District. The program offers preschool education to children funded by Head Start, Colorado Preschool Program, Special Education, as well as a tuition paying option. One of the goals of the program is to connect preschool families with services in the community. Last year, the program enhanced a partnership with the Loveland Public Library by holding an annual family game night at the library instead of the preschool centers. Previously, staff were unable to host all families together at one preschool site, therefore, the program held several game nights at separate sites.

The children's services supervisor at the library solved this capacity problem by generously providing space to accommodate all of the families at one time. Families in the preschool program, as well as family support staff, were invited to help plan the event.

The Early Childhood staff set up board games in the story-telling room, and a snack room was provided for families to play card games and enjoy healthy snacks donated by local grocery stores. The bilingual librarian, who also offers story time in Spanish in the classrooms, was on hand to help families obtain library cards, give tours, and answer questions in English and Spanish. This event was a great way to share learning activities with families and promote parent-child relationships as well as positive relationships with staff. Families were provided information about library resources and checked out books with their children.

The result of the partnership with the public library has proven to be successful. Last year, 27 families reported that they received library cards, and this year 41 families received library cards, according to a family survey. Families also reported that they now visit the library more regularly. In addition to family game night, the preschool programs are now working with multiple community partners to host a preschool fair at the library in collaboration with a county-wide school readiness initiative known as *Be Ready*. This preschool fair is an opportunity for prospective preschool parents to learn about the program as well as other preschool programs in the Thompson community.

By connecting families to the public library, awareness of the importance of early literacy increases, and families have the opportunity to be engaged in their child's education. Program staff would encourage any early childhood program to enhance their partnership with their public library. Community institutions such as libraries reinforce the concept that children can "learn anytime, anywhere."

Farm-To-School Service Learning Partnership

Colorado State University and MCV School District 51

Grand Junction, CO



The Mesa County Valley School District has partnered with the Colorado State University (CSU) Community Alliance for Education and Hunger Relief program to provide students with hands-on learning in agriculture, life sciences, and nutrition. Students start vegetable seedlings in the greenhouse and help plant four acres of vegetables in the CSU Western Colorado Research Center Farm-to-School plots. The same students return in the fall to harvest their produce.

The experiences are more meaningful when the students eat and share what they have grown. As such, the harvests are served on their school cafeteria salad bars and donated to area food banks and pantries. Since 2017, over 2,000 students have participated in over 6,100 hours of service learning at the Research Center. Roughly 173,000 pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables have been distributed through food banks and pantries, the school lunch program and the summer meal service program (the Lunch Lizard).



Teachers and the Community Alliance program work together to enrich the hands-on experiences through pre- and post-field trip classroom STEM activities. Many activities focus on food and nutrition because students are more willing to eat fruits and vegetables if they have positive experiences with healthy foods. Increased knowledge about and repeated exposure to healthy foods through school meals (educational experiences provided by community partners) reduce students' fear of new foods and increase willingness to try them.

The partnership also extends outside of the school building. Students involved in after-school youth organizations participate in service learning with the Community Alliance. Families volunteer to harvest from the orchards and vegetable plots all summer long. The scale of Research Center and the teaching kitchen facilities allow for students across the district to gain hands-on experiences in agriculture and nutrition in multiple contexts.

Health and Wellness Parent Advisory Committee

Denver Public Schools and Action for Healthy Kids

Denver, CO



With support from Action for Healthy Kids and Denver Public Schools (DPS) Food and Nutrition Services, parents from eight schools in southwest Denver are meeting regularly with district staff to discuss student health, unite their voices, and advocate for healthy changes to their schools' wellness policies and practices. The goals of the DPS Health & Wellness Southwest Parent Advisory Committee are to educate parents about district health goals and initiatives, educate DPS staff about the interests and concerns of DPS families, and provide opportunities for staff and families to build trusting, collaborative relationships to improve school health and academic outcomes together within the framework of the [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child](#) (WSCC) model recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



The parent group was initially founded as a partnership between DPS Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK), and Westwood Unidos. Action for Healthy Kids is a nonprofit dedicated to creating healthier school communities across Colorado. Westwood Unidos is a neighborhood leadership organization that works to build the capacity of community members to be engaged in public policy and decision-making that affects their lives.



The committee meets 6-8 times during the school year. Monthly discussion topics related to school nutrition, physical activity, social emotional climate, and mental health are determined by the committee members in advance, and speakers from different student support services in DPS (e.g., social work, psychology, nursing, etc.) are brought in to let parents know what services are available and what opportunities exist for families to get engaged with the work at a community level to support the success of all students. The meeting format (brief presentations followed by community sharing and discussion) provides an opportunity for parents to learn from district staff, community experts and each other.

The group's collaboration has increased family engagement and community involvement and has led to significant improvements to the school nutrition environment to date. School policies and practices around access to water have been strengthened—parents worked with their individual school principals to institute changes in their school cafeterias in ways that best fit each school's needs.

Having a committed parent-leader to serve as community organizer has been critical to the success of the practice. Finding someone who cares deeply about the work, who has connections and personal credibility within the community, and the skills to build trusting relationships is worth an investment of time and funding.

No Student Goes Hungry

Kenton Elementary School

Aurora, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Kenton Elementary is dedicated to provide a supportive environment to all students, families, and the broader school community. About 520 students attend Kenton, which has the highest percentage of homeless families in Aurora Public Schools (APS). It is common for students to come to school without coats, socks, proper shoes, breakfast or lunch, and some without a good night's sleep. Through multiple community partnerships, Kenton provides every Kenton family in need with healthy food for consistent meals, 7 days a week.

One portion of this initiative is called "Super Snack", which is part of APS' nutrition services. Kenton's assistant principal, family liaison, and parent volunteers help after school by making sure all students receive a snack and milk in the cafeteria before going home. Teachers bring their students after school to pick up a "Super Snack" and eat it before the after school program begins.

Kenton staff also continue the "No Student Goes Hungry" initiative during lunch. Cafeteria managers and staff have the students line up, get lunch, and then walk around the tables to inspect the students' lunches. If a student brings something small from home to eat, they are encouraged to also eat school lunch to make sure they are eating from all the five food groups. Kitchen managers and staff also provide breakfast to all classrooms in the morning and help clean up so that all students get to eat before class lectures begin.

Food Bank of the Rockies also supports Kenton's goal. The organization provides students with healthy meals to eat over the weekend. Some families do not use all of the donations. The family liaison encourages families to bring food items from the food bags that they don't need to the office in order to provide these food items to other families who need additional food.

Hearing the positive comments from the parents have encourage Kenton staff to continue the practice. Parents who come to school looking for weekly bags are always happy to know Kenton can help with additional food. Families come with younger children who are not school age to eat with their siblings during After School Snack.

The entire program has been a huge help for Kenton families and a community-wide endeavor. Secure a Christian picked-up and delivered the 125 food bags from the food bank to the school. Having volunteer helpers is what makes it possible for the school to be able to offer additional food and supervision during distribution and afterschool snack.

Kenton's principal Mr. Holscher states: "In order to make a difference in what we believe in, we need to do it often, every day or it won't work." When the whole school works together to make these programs and other educational programs happen, the entire community feels the impact of "No student goes hungry." Mrs. Hirsch, assistant principal at Kenton, stated, "The school climate has shifted and feels incredibly welcoming for students and their families."

Standard 6—Collaborating with the Community

Portraits of Respect

Peak Expeditionary School

Wheat Ridge, CO



Staff and students at Peak Expeditionary School talk a lot about “CREW Core Values”. CREW stands for Courage, Respect, Empathy, and quality Work. Students spend a lot of time reflecting on how they are demonstrating CREW values and recognizing it in their peers. Connected with this, Peak’s principal created a school wide project focused on respect so that children would develop a deeper understanding of what respect truly means - especially since it is a hard concept to really verbalize in a deep way without oversimplifying it. Portraits of Respect is a three part project where students interview someone in the community who demonstrated respect, write a reflection on what they learned from that interview, and then create an artistic portrait of that person.



Every student, Kindergarten through fifth grade, chose someone in their life either from the school community, their family, or the wider community who they saw as demonstrating respect. Students interviewed peers, grandparents, fire fighters, veterans, teachers, parents, older siblings, preschoolers, and community partners. The community impact was powerful. Family members felt honored that they were being interviewed and elevated in that way, and students learned about respect from so many different voices.

Students then synthesized what they learned by writing the reflections and creating the portraits. The school hosted a “Portraits of Respect Gallery Walk” once all the portraits were completed so that all the family members and community partners that had been interviewed had the opportunity to see the final products students had created. It was a powerful community event to have so many diverse voices in the same space, elevated because of student’s recognition of them and how they live their lives. Many portraits and writing reflections remained displayed in hallway for the remainder of the year so that students can continue to reflect on and remember what they learned about respect.



This project was truly a whole-school and whole-community endeavor. The principal conceived the project outline, but every person in the school community was part of the implementation, from classroom teachers to support staff, the art teacher, students, families, and community members. Teachers and support staff taught students about interview skills and helped students write their reflections. The art teacher was instrumental; he had each grade level use a different medium to complete the portraits and taught students about facial proportions. Families and community members were also instrumental in this project in the way that they volunteered their time to be interviewed which provided the deep meaning of the project’s content.

Peak Expeditionary’s Family Engagement Liaison offers the following advice: “Don’t do it partially! Do every aspect of Portraits of Respect: interviews, art portraits, written reflections, and the gallery walk. The reason this project was powerful was because it was an opportunity to elevate the voices of our families.”

Standard 6—Collaborating with the Community

Preparing Urban Community Teachers

University of Colorado - Denver

Denver, CO



The most successful urban community teachers have developed the skills, knowledge, dispositions, practices, and awareness that allow them to engage with the families of all students in every school regardless of difference in race, class, or family status/structure, as well as the communities within which they teach. At the University of Colorado Denver (UCD), teacher education faculty work in close collaboration with mentor teachers and leaders in over 20 P-12 schools across the metro area, and diverse individuals from the communities those schools serve to prepare the next generation of urban community teachers.

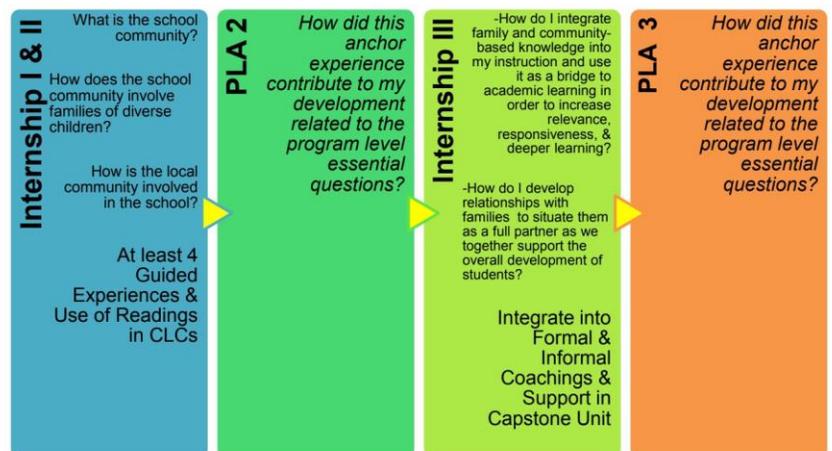
The university graduates nearly 100 teacher candidates per year who have had well over 1000 hours of embedded clinical experience working in diverse schools and communities that serve as our committed partners in this endeavor. Faculty have approached this work over the past decade, not only collaboratively with the school and community partners, but comprehensively thinking about how coursework integrates with clinical experiences across the program to prepare candidates.

University and school-based teacher educators support candidates through weekly feedback and facilitation of mediating seminars. Assignments and learning activities include community-based ecological asset mapping, interviews or partnered dialogues with parents and family members of children they are working with, participation in school-based family engagement events like literacy/math nights or home visits, and early inquiry projects and case studies working with children and families. Then, in

the final professional residency year, an inquiry-based family and community engagement anchor experience is threaded across the year that enables candidates to deeply understand the community context and family engagement practices at their residency school so that they can ultimately be supported in leveraging those experiences to design instruction and partner with their students' families to support their overall success.

As other teacher preparation programs consider how they are preparing their candidates, it's critical to think holistically about the entire program. It can't be a single course, a single field experience, or a single assignment. In the words of one recent graduate, "I teach 32 beautiful 4th grade multilingual learners...I was prepared, I knew how to be a teacher before stepping into my own classroom...Not only was I able to work in schools prior to obtaining my teaching license, I was also able to work with the communities with the intentionality to help our students develop as whole children."

Standard 6—Collaborating with the Community



For 21 years, Welchester Elementary has provided students with a day of enrichment called Welchester University. This day is held at the end of the school year and creates enrichment opportunities that allow students to apply their learning in authentic settings. Community partners support the University, including the Elks, local stores, restaurants, and other organizations.

These partnerships provide classes such as: Backyard/Open Space Bird Watching, Basketball, Bug Hunters, Circus Arts, The Craft of Cooking, Drums Alive, Fix a Bike, Fly Tying, Fun with Food, Friendship Bracelets, Green Bag Lady, Grow Garden, Golf, Home Depot craft kits, Hydrogeology, Improv, Jewelry making, Keyboarding, Kid Coders, Knot tying, Lacrosse, Math class, Mindfulness, Mystery Science, Origami, Quilting, Secret Messages, String Art, Space Camp, Tech Class, The Life of Trees, Violins, Voice Over/Production, Yoga, Robotics, and 4-H classes. Each year the classes may change in order to meet the interest and needs of the current student population.

Many of the classes provide cross curricular connections in various contents. For example, during The Craft of Cooking, students use technology standards to research and find recipes. When measuring the ingredients, students will use fractions, addition, and multiplication. Students are reading step-by-step instructions which ties to expository writing. Lastly, students are able to identify food groups and nutrition while cooking and sampling the food.

Planning Welchester University involves teachers, staff, students, PTA, community partners, and district personnel. Teachers work with their students to identify interests and needs, as well as align activities with current grade level standards. The Family Engagement Liaison works with families, community members, district personnel, and the PTA to support the event through resources, financial contribution and instructors.

With any event this big, there are always some challenges. Scheduling, space, and weather often present last minute changes or cancellations. Sometimes presenters arrive late, don't always have enough materials, or cancel a few days before the event. Therefore, constant communication is key to having a successful back-up plan. Another challenge is finding consistent instructors to facilitate classes that students have interests in and instructors that will donate their services.

For those hoping to replicate Welchester University, event organizers recommend identifying a purpose and vision early in the process. Work with teachers and students to align activities with standards, interests, and needs. Create a committee early with various stakeholders to form schedules, request donations, make calls to community partners and presenters.

One community partner states: "We always love working with your students for Welchester University. You have such a great habitat for birds that teaching and engaging your students is as easy as getting them outside. Thank you for this opportunity to inspire future bird and nature lovers!"

Standard 6—Collaborating with the Community

For more information and
partnering materials:

SACPIE

www.cde.state.co.us/sacpie

CDE

www.cde.state.co.us/resourcesforparents

Questions

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State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education



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