

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."