

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