

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.

