

Donuts for Dads

Coal Creek Elementary School

Louisville, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Traditionally, connecting with fathers in schools has been a challenge. Coal Creek Elementary School in Louisville has addressed this by hosting a morning event strictly for fathers called Donuts for Dads. Donuts for Dads creates an avenue for the fathers of students at Coal Creek to gather on a regular basis in a fun and informal way.

Staff found that fathers of students were underrepresented at PTA/PTO meetings, with typically one or two males in attendance, and that women far outnumbered men as volunteers in the classroom. At Donuts for Dads, Coal Creek staff learned that one reason fathers were not attending the PTA meetings was due to a perception that there was a prescribed agenda, and “too much talk; too little action.” Donuts for Dads is an opportunity for fathers to come together to make connections with other male parents, ask questions, and find out about PTA/PTO and school activities where their presence and support is needed. Between 20-25 men attend Donuts for Dads, and this even has helped to balance the female to male volunteer presence on the school campus.

The principal of Coal Creek Elementary hosts Donuts for Dads, plans the event with the help of a community or family liaison, parent volunteer coordinator, and the PTA. Donuts for Dads occurs three to four times a year for one hour or less. Morning groups have had higher attendance than afternoon or evening attempts, as it is easier to “catch” parents while they are dropping their children off at school.

At the start of the group, the principal delivers a brief message and outlines upcoming goals and activities where parent support is needed. The rest of the time is dedicated to the dads making connections to one another and opportunities for them to ask questions.

An email is sent out following the group meeting that summarizes what was discussed. The principal also communicates the outcome of the meeting with the PTA leadership and school faculty. Donuts for Dads costs less than \$100 per year; community partners may be willing to donate food and coffee, or the gathering could be paid for the PTA or principal’s fund.

Feedback is collected via an informal survey and discussions with dads following the meetings. Reports from the fathers who have participated have been consistently positive, and the Coal Creek principal shared that he enjoys this special time he gets to spend with the dads at Coal Creek.