

The State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is pleased to share this second 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 13-193).



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

In Partnership,

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CDE and SACPIE would like to acknowledge and thank Jes Colebrook for helping to write the narratives for this publication.



Inviting parents to a relaxed, informal gathering is a great way to bring families and school staff together that allows for parents to check in about specific things happening at school and mingle with one another while enjoying coffee and baked goods. At University Hill Elementary School in Boulder, Cafecitos have become a key way of connecting to and engaging with families.

Events such as Cafecitos are appropriate for any grade level. A Community or Family Liaison can plan the event with the help of a parent volunteer coordinator, the PTA/PTO, and other community partners. Staff at University Hill Elementary note that having the principal's participation makes a huge difference. There are three steps in implementing Cafecitos: 1) Determine location, date, and time; 2) Clear the date and confirm with individuals attending the gathering, i.e. principal, community partners, liaisons, or others; and 3) Gather and pack or order from a local coffee shop coffee/tea and baked goods. Approximately three hours of work goes into each Cafecitos: .5 hours of planning, such as scheduling and deciding on a location, date, and time, as well as sending emails to community partners; 1 hour of printing and emailing flyers to parents and posting flyers around the school; .5 hours of prepping coffee and going out to purchase baked goods; and 1 hour for the actual event to occur.

By scheduling a Cafecito event the second or third week of the month and announcing the gathering in a monthly newsletter or by adding it to the school calendar of events, parents learn about the gathering in time to not forget and to ensure successful attendance. A simple attendance sheet can be used to evaluate the success of the gathering. Cafecitos are relatively inexpensive to host. Coffee and baked goods may cost around \$25. Plates and cups may be provided by the local coffee shop, purchased at a grocery store for \$5-10, or regular mugs and plates on site can be used. Staff should consider inviting an interpreter if there are no school staff at the gathering that speak the specific language of a family. This would increase the cost of the event.

University Hill Elementary Staff recommend offering Cafecitos at different times each month so that parents who can't make it early in the morning may be able to the following month. Additionally, hosting Cafecitos at different locations throughout the community may make them more accessible to parents with transportation barriers. Finally, while you want parents to have an opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns, and experiences, it is helpful to have a general discussion topics such as what to expect at parent-teacher conferences, summer school, or transitioning to the next grade level.

Cafecitos is a great way of connecting with parents and creating a welcoming school community.

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.



At Boston K-8 in Aurora, family engagement is embedded within multiple school programs and goals. Boston K-8 staff want to make sure that families have multiple chances to engage in their child's academic success. As a very diverse school with 17 different spoken languages used among the student and family population, a major focus of Boston K-8 is creating a community that is empowered and connected and an environment where families feel welcome and part of a larger family.

Parent coffee meetings and other family events teach parents ways to become more involved in their students' academic success and how to help their students succeed academically. Through different literacy programs, parents have learned techniques to guide their child's reading at home, and students have had more books made available to them.

Cultural exposure and learning from each other has been a key component to bringing students and families together. Events hosted by the school include the Cultural Event, Holi Celebration, a Cinco de Mayo Celebration, a Talent Show and Show Case, and Literacy Night. These events and others give students and families opportunities to share and to be proud of their cultural differences, and encourage acceptance of one another. A better understanding of cultural differences throughout the Boston K-8 community helps students stay focused on their academics. Diverse friendships among students have flourished while discipline problems have been drastically reduced.

Boston K-8 staff has partnered with many different community members to share valuable information, programs, and resources with families. Partnering with Aurora Community Connections brought Cooking Matters courses to the school community, as well as assistance with SNAP applications and obtaining family insurance, parenting classes, and a folkloric dance team for students. Through partnerships with Second Chance Bicycle Shop and Wish for Wheels, over 90 bicycles have been provided to students and those with broken bikes have gotten them fixed for free. Boston K-8's partnerships with Soul Food, Food Bank of the Rockies, and local churches has also provided families with food throughout the year, and for over 80 families during the holiday season.

Boston K-8 staff strongly recommend making family engagement a yearlong practice so as not to lose momentum with engaged families and community partners. Offering a wide variety of events and resources connects the school, families, and community, and builds a trusting and nurturing environment for students to succeed in.

Our School Our Community

Scavenger Hunt

McGlone Elementary School

Denver, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

McGlone Elementary is intentional in how it builds its school culture and establishes shared school values. One of the school's core values is Shared Community, which means that all school staff are familiar with the local neighborhood and view the community as essential partners in educating and serving students and families. One way this is accomplished is through the Our School, Our Community Scavenger Hunt.

Grounded in the shared belief that family and community involvement in their neighborhood school is critical to students' success, the Our School, Our Community Scavenger Hunt has three goals. These are: 1) To lay the foundation for a school culture that understands and collaborates with the broader community; 2) To help teachers meet key community members, become familiar with neighborhood establishments, and continue to build relationships outside of the school building; and 3) To familiarize the community with the school and its staff.

At the start of the year, the administrative team at McGlone Elementary works with community leaders, local business owners, and oftentimes parents and students to learn where students are most likely to spend their time when not in school. The administrative team then puts together a half day school and neighborhood scavenger hunt for all school staff. During their professional development time before students arrive, teams of staff wearing McGlone shirts head out across the school campus and into the surrounding area. Examples of activities on the Our School, Our Community Scavenger Hunt include meeting the school janitorial staff or going to the biggest apartment complex in the neighborhood. Over the course of three hours, teams must then take photos with the people, items, or places in order to complete the activity.

The administration at McGlone Elementary believe the Our School, Our Community Scavenger Hunt is the first step in laying for foundation for strong family, school, and community partnerships and sets the tone for the school year. McGlone Elementary's Principal has found that since implementing the scavenger hunt, there has been a decreased teacher turnover and increased teacher satisfaction, greater team collaboration among educators, and deeper relationships with the community with more support for the school and its staff.

Kenton Elementary School staff in Aurora know that when the basic needs of families are met, students are better prepared to meet academic challenges. As a school with one of the largest populations of students who are homeless in the Aurora School District, one of the most pressing basic needs of families and students is access to food over weekend breaks. Staff at Kenton planned and implemented the Totes for Hope program to address this need.

The Totes for Hope program is coordinated and run by volunteers from Kenton Elementary, including the Family Liaison, the Community Core Liaison, staff, and parent volunteers. These individuals meet each week to pick up food on Fridays and organize it in the school cafeteria after lunch. Families are then encouraged to help themselves at the end of the day.

Totes for Hope highlights the importance of understanding the school community and the needs of families and students, particularly in high poverty areas. By asking for family input, the planning committee provides families and students with the most useful and necessary food items to get them through the weekend. By offering Totes for Hope school-wide, families don't need to be identified individually and so may feel more comfortable picking up the bag of food.

By the end of the school year, Totes for Hope saw an increase in the number of families who participated and staff was able to determine that what was being provided to families was helpful. Staff at Kenton Elementary learned that not all students have access to necessary and basic items when outside of the school community, and by providing those items to students and families in need, schools can promote a stronger sense of unity and encourage student success.

Visiting with Principals

Fort Lewis College
Durango, CO



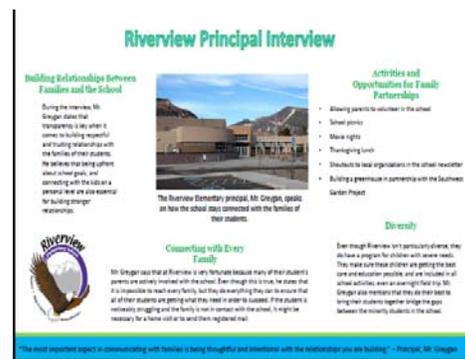
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The ability of teachers to cultivate strong family, school, and community partnerships is first developed in preservice training. At Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, students in the ED 329 Family and Community Relationships course learn about respectful and trusting relationships between home and school. These preservice teachers learn strategies that schools can use to build on cultural and family differences that support learning communities and networks for families.

Students in the Family and Community Relationships course are charged with becoming familiar with both the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, a framework published by the US Department of Education that guides the development of family engagement strategies, policies, and programs, and the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, published by the PTA. The cumulative assignment in the course is visiting and interviewing as a small team an elementary school principal in a local, rural school district. Based on the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, students ask principals the following questions:

- How do you build respectful and trusting relationships between your student's home and the school?
- What strategies do you employ that builds on the intellectual, social, and human capital of and cultural difference of families in your program?
- What strategies do you use to build learning communities and networks for families?
- How do you connect and work with families to the teaching and learning goals you have for students?
- Are families included in improvement strategies such as recruitment and training of teacher and school-wide evaluation and assessment?
- What other activities and opportunities for family partnerships do you employ that you would like to tell us about?

To showcase what they learned, students then created and were evaluated on a poster highlighting the interview. Students were graded on the creativity of the poster and their knowledge concerning the family-school partnering practice illustrated on the poster.



Annual Family Meetings

Swink School District

Swink, CO



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Department of Education

Staff in Swink School District value getting to know students and families one-on-one. In a small, rural district, this is easily accomplished by inviting families to annual meetings at the start of each school year.

During these meetings, staff provide students and families with three main resources. The first is a letter that provides information on steps the students should be taking that year, such as resume building opportunities, SAT and ACT planning, and college planning. This information ensures that students and families don't miss out on important dates and activities. The second resource is a Goals Questionnaire that encourages students and families to start planning for the transition out of high school, whether it be college, technical school, military, or joining the work force. The third resource is a Resume Worksheet. Students begin using this worksheet during their freshman year to keep track of jobs, community service hours, and awards in one spot, making resume building an easy activity as students plan for their future.

While such meetings were initially intended for juniors and seniors, sophomore parents are beginning to request similar meetings, suggesting how successful this family-school partnering practice is in Swink School District.

Name: _____ HIS Graduation Year: 20 ____

Grade: ~~9~~ 10 11 Senior Junior Sophomore Freshman

Goals Questionnaire

1. What is your plan after you graduate from high school? (please circle any that you are considering)

Work Junior college (AA/AS degree) 4-year college/university (enter as freshman)

Technical school Undecided Junior College/Transfer to 4-year university

Military (please specify branch(es) of service) _____

2. Is/are there specific school(s) that you are interested in applying? If so, what are the names? Have you already visited the schools?

_____	Visited?	Yes	No	Website?	Yes	No
_____	Visited?	Yes	No	Website?	Yes	No
_____	Visited?	Yes	No	Website?	Yes	No

3. Are you able to visit the school(s) you listed and haven't seen with a family member? Yes No

4. Have you thought about an interest/major of study? If so, what are some of the possibilities?

5. Are you planning on applying for scholarships/financial aid? Yes No

6. Are you planning on participating in athletics in college? Yes No

7. What entrance exams have you taken? ACT SAT PSAT

8. Have you started your resume in preparation for scholarship applications? Yes No

Finally, what assistance would you like from the Swink Counseling Office to help support your goals?

Art Galleria

Peoria Elementary School

Aurora, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Celebrating student creativity is a unique and exciting way to bring families, schools, and communities together. At Peoria Elementary School in Aurora, expanding a traditional school carnival into the Art Galleria, a fun event for families, is a lively way of showing what students are learning and creating in Art Class, while also highlighting how the arts connect with science, math, and history.

Art Galleria involves the whole school and surrounding community partners. The Family Liaison planned and organized the event with the help of school staff, teachers, the Community Core Liaison, parent volunteers, and community volunteers. To make the event more meaningful, the Family Liaison made sure to include an academic component.

Evaluations were collected in both written format and by word of mouth. Peoria Elementary staff learned that by actively engaging with families, they become more interested and committed to doing what they can outside of the school setting to encourage learning. Families reported a better understanding of how learning takes on more than one form.

Peoria Elementary staff recommend that when planning an event such as the Art Galleria, to start as early as possible and to include the involved teachers, such as the art teachers, in the planning. It's important to remember that teachers' time is limited, and that by starting early, all of those involved in the planning have enough time and opportunity to review the plan multiple times in order to work out any challenges or obstacles that arise.

Attendance Information

Workshops

Park Lane Elementary School
Aurora, CO



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A critical component of student success is attendance, and at Park Lane Elementary School in Aurora, staff host Attendance Information Workshops to help families understand the importance of being in school every day and how attendance affects student academic growth.

The Attendance Information Workshops were a school-wide effort. The truancy team met with school staff and the Family Liaison to plan a series of workshops for families on why students need to be in school every day. The planning team took into consideration the diversity of Park Lane Elementary and designed the workshops to better meet the needs of the diverse student and family population.

Initially, the Attendance Information Workshops were offered to new parents in the school and were scheduled quarterly. As the workshops appeared successful, another one was added for ELL families. In the workshop for ELL families, information was also provided on how the school system is organized. Such information is crucial to student success for families who are unfamiliar with how the American school system runs. Because Park Lane Elementary is a Title I school, Title I funds were used to cover any costs associated with the Attendance Information Workshops.

Such workshops link to student outcomes because a student who is on time to school and in their seat at the start of the day will have a full day of learning. The Attendance Information Workshops were evaluated by looking at the audience attendance of each workshop and the associated students' tardies and absences. Staff determined that students' tardies and absences improved for those students whose families attended the workshops.

Parents need to know what the school attendance policy is and how much attendance impacts student learning. If families only have access to this information through a school manual, it's unlikely that they will refer to it. However, if families are invited into a friendly environment where information on supporting their child is shared, they are much more responsive and engaged.

Home Visits

Altura Elementary School

Aurora, CO



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Home visits by Altura Elementary School staff in Aurora supports students and families by helping families become more informed. By making home visits a consistent practice, school staff can work more closely with families to identify the source of problems related to attendance and truancy, rather than having to guess.

One day a week, the Family Liaison at Altura Elementary meets with the Attendance Response Team (ART) to discuss which students are struggling and would benefit from home visits. Student and parent responses to the home visits have been widely positive. Parents have become more comfortable asking for needed resources that they would not otherwise have asked for, in addition to resources to support student achievement such as books, supplies, workshops, and information around getting their students to school on time as well as on making home life easier to manage.

As a result of the consistency of the Home Visits program, Altura Elementary has seen several students previously listed as truant, begin to make changes to turn around their attendance. There has also been an increase in trust between the parent and school, with parents regarding the school as a community partner.

Parent-to-Parent Email Lists

Boulder Community School of Integrated Studies
Boulder, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Implementing ways for parents to communicate with one another and easily communicate with the school makes communication practices much easier for school staff. Boulder Community School of Integrated Studies (BCSIS) recognized that while Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) has strong top-down communication mechanisms, such as district emails, principal emails, and teacher emails, there was no system in place to facilitate communications from PTA/PTO to parents and for parents to communicate with each other. BCSIS established a Parent-to-Parent Email List, a standardized set of email lists with one per classroom.

BCSIS used their Ed Council Web Service so that parents knew that in their classroom, they could email to the alias teachername-parents@freidnsfbc.org, an easy email address to remember when your child's teacher changes each year. This email list helps parent-teacher representatives communicate with parents in their classrooms, and helps parents to engage with other parents, thus enhancing the feeling of community at the school. News and reminders can be sent out through the Parent-to-Parent Email List, as can information on volunteer opportunities, questions parents want to ask other parents, and photos from field trips, among other things.

The Parent-to-Parent Email List uses a list service through Ariel MIS (www.arielmis.com) and is run by a computer-savvy BVSD parent. While setting up a list of parent emails per classroom is initially time-consuming (about 16 hours at the beginning of the school year), it pays off in the long run. BCSIS piggybacked on the opt-in student directory list, so all parents opting in to be in a student directory were added to the initial email lists. Those involved in the planning then did outreach in each classroom with handouts and principal-initiated emails to promote more sign-ups.

The Parent Representative at BCSIS shared that the Parent-to-Parent Email List tends to be self-policing, with inappropriate emails being rare and, when they do occur, are usually handled by the community of parents. Teachers value the Parent-to-Parent Email List as most of what is sent on the list helps make their jobs easier, such as coordinating classroom volunteering. The Parent-to-Parent Email List is a great way of getting parents connected not just to the school, but to each other.

Parent Visit Nights

Community Montessori

Boulder, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Parent Visit Nights at Community Montessori in Boulder provide parents with an opportunity to learn what their students are doing in class time, as well as how students use their Montessori materials in their learning on a regular basis. Parent Visit Nights give parents a chance to engage with their student around learning, and to connect with the school in a positive and fun way.

Prior to the scheduled Parent Visit Night, students work in collaboration with their teachers toward creating a plan to show the parents the different materials the students use in their learning. Students spend about two hours preparing a presentation for their parents, then practicing the lesson they will give to their parents. Students are then responsible for their own presentation during Parent Visit Night while working with their parents as a group and with minimum intervention from the teacher.

To provide enough room to students for their presentations, the class can be divided into two groups, with one group scheduled for the first 45 minutes of the event and the second group scheduled for the last 45 minutes of the event. Parent Visit Nights are scheduled into the School Calendar and occur before parent-teacher conferences. This gives parents an opportunity to ask teachers follow-up questions about the lessons they heard and what their student presented on. Once scheduled, office staff send reminders to parents and include a note about the event in the school newsletter. Teachers also send reminders through a classroom newsletter. To help answer questions during Parent Visit Night, staff should coordinate volunteers who can be available.

As Community Montessori uses a variety of materials in their teaching, other schools should consider what activities they can involve students and parents in, such as games to support math, reading, or writing. Planning a Parent Visit Night as a game night makes it fun for everyone.

Sharing Partnering Stories

from the Field

SACPIE Elementary Committee



COLORADO
Department of Education

Family, school, and community partnering (FSCP) is a critical component of student success. As such, FSCP should be integrated into school improvement and functioning, yet it is often conducted in isolation and seen as an add-on. As FSCP practices become increasingly recognized in importance in the education of children, it is vital that experiences be shared and that educators, families, and community members have opportunities to learn from one another.

The goal of Sharing Partnering Stories from the Field is to support all stakeholders in learning to celebrate successful examples of family, school, and community partnering and in demonstrating effective practices. Positive family, school, and community partnering examples teach others how to partner for effective academic and behavioral learning. On the other hand, sharing challenging partnering stories provide opportunities to collaborate on how to overcome similar experiences in the future.

Any stakeholder can implement Sharing Partnering Stories from the Field. Stories can come from any grade level and any setting. It's important to set guidelines and to create an advisory group that includes educators, families, students, and community resources. In order to celebrate as many successful stories as there are, and to spread the word through the school community, different publicity tactics can be used, such as sharing at faculty meetings or publishing the stories in newsletters or on websites.

For example, After hearing about the value of family-school partnering, a high school chemistry teacher reported that he had gone to his building administrator and asked about the possibility of putting the topic “on the agenda” for his professional learning community (PLC). Although she seemed skeptical, saying that high school students should be emancipating from their parents and developing their own sense of responsibility, the principal allowed the teacher try the discussion with his colleagues. The professional learning community thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity and now has partnering “on the agenda” for every meeting. Representatives from different departments share homework ideas and home-school communication strategies they are implementing. After several months, the group requested formal professional development opportunities to learn more about the research and strategies that are known to be effective.

During the second year of including the topic regularly in professional learning sessions, the PLC members decided to invite some family members on a monthly basis so as to offer their viewpoints and add a family perspective to school documents websites, and communications. The PLC also developed a “student advisory panel” that guided them in understanding the adolescent perspective. Through collaborative decision-making, it was determined that there was a need to incorporate some partnering data collection and analyses so as to better understand the effectiveness of their partnering practices. The PLC members surveyed families and students about how they perceived school-family partnering was working since they had been implementing some specific, intentional strategies around technology, communication, and homework. Several students mentioned that they now had more positive and interesting discussions about school with their families. One student was quoted as saying, “Yeah, it gives us something to talk about at dinner”.

Sharing Partnering Stories from the Field is an activity that brings stakeholders together with one common goal – understanding the positive impact that family, school, and community partnering has on student outcomes.

Standard 2—Communicating Effectively

Take Your Parent to School Day

Laredo Elementary School

Aurora, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Sharing information with families on what occurs throughout the school day helps families better understand how they can best support their child’s academics and how they can best partner with the school. At Laredo Elementary School in Aurora, staff accomplish this by inviting parents to Take Your Parent to School Day.

The goal of Take Your Parent to School Day is to share information with families at all grade levels about what happens at Laredo Elementary throughout the day and how everyone involved with the students can impact their academic achievement. During their time at the school, parents learn about supporting their child’s learning, community involvement, discipline policies, and the importance of attendance. Staff who supported Take Your Parent to School Day included literacy teachers, classroom teachers, the principal and assistant principal, TOSA, the family liaison, and CCL.

Information was shared with parents in a variety of formats, allowing parents to see the correlation between what is done both inside and outside of the classroom with student outcomes. When families understand the structure of the school day, how the school operates, and are aware of opportunities they have access to to support their child and the school, they grow more empowered to be an engaged participant in the education system.

Data from Laredo Elementary showed an improvement in school attendance and fewer referrals and suspensions. Staff hope to see an increase in community involvement and numbers of volunteers at the school.

Marketing events such as Take Your Parent to School Day is important for increasing rates of parent participation. Laredo Elementary staff recommend using as many ways of announcing the event as possible. Examples they used include the school calendar, the outside marquee, phone messenger, and having students write personal invitations to their parents. Events such as Take Your Parent to School Day show their value in providing opportunities for families to ask questions, thus making sure that expectations and policies are well understood.



The Book Bag Program at Lyn Knoll Elementary School in Aurora is making sure that every student has access to a variety of suitable books each week. The goal of the Book Bag Program is to increase reading fluency of students, and testing of students' reading skills shows that the program is successful.

The Book Bag Program grew out of a partnership created in 2015 between Lyn Knoll, the Texas-based specialty retailer Conn's, and First Book, a nonprofit organization that provides access to new books for children in need. Initially, Conn's and First Book donated 1,000 books to the elementary school.

Every week, each student gets to take a book bag home with five books that have been chosen to support their independent reading level. Students are encouraged to read for 30 minutes each day at home. The Book Bag Program also supports ELL students with their English language skills. The assistant principal, Community Liaison, and parent volunteers help the Family Liaison to replenish and replace books, and to make sure each bag is suitable for each child. New books are purchased with PTSO money, while older books currently in the building are also used.

In a community where many families do not have books of their own and the closest public library is two miles away, students and families are encouraged to read and learn through the Book Bag Program.

Family Connections/Camp

iPads for Parents

St. Vrain Valley School District
Longmont, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

In St. Vrain Valley School District, empowering parents to navigate the digital world and understand 21st-century learning is a priority for educating the whole child. St. Vrain accomplished this by distributing 16,000 iPads and 8,000 Chromebooks to students and families as part of their Learning Technology Plan.

In addition to the iPads, a bi-weekly blog titled “Family Connections” is published with tips, tricks, and information on navigating technology and media as a family. St. Vrain also offers in-person learning opportunities called “Camp iPad for Parents.” Offered at multiple and ongoing times, Camp iPad for Parents highlights classroom learning practices that students experience while providing information on parenting in a digital age.

St. Vrain recognizes that the field of education has changed since most parents were in school and that in order to educate the whole child, the entire family unit must be involved in the learning process. Having a healthy relationship with technology at home and at school is a necessary skill for 21st-century students, and by involving families in the district’s Learning Technology Plan, St. Vrain is sending families a message that they are critical to their child’s education.

Literacy Night

Bear Creek Elementary School

Monument, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Literacy Night at Bear Creek Elementary School in the Lewis Palmer School District exposes students and families to a variety of fun activities in the school community.

Flyers, a newsletter, and personal outreach were used to invite all students and families in Bear Creek Elementary to Literacy Night. RSVPs were requested from those interested in attending in order to plan for the correct number of people. A volunteer committee of Bear Creek Elementary staff and teachers planned and implemented Literacy Night, while the PTO helped with financial support.

For Literacy Night, various activity stations were set up by grade level with different literacy targets for the activity. Students and family members checked in as they arrived and were given a card. At each station they participated in, they were given a sticker to put on their card. Students and families could attend activity stations according to their grade level, as well as a grade level above or below. At the end of the evening, if they had a certain number of stickers on their card, they were awarded books and prizes.

Staff at Bear Creek Elementary recommend speaking with a literacy coordinator at your school or another school if you are interested in hosting a Literacy Night for students and families. Additionally, it is important to involve parents on the planning committee.

Parents are critical in fostering a love of reading and improving literacy outcomes for students. Additionally, parent involvement in literacy programs has been found to have a positive relationship to the development of the child's social-emotional skills. Literacy Night at Bear Creek Elementary encourages families to become more involved and engaged with their children's literacy skills, thus providing students to succeed academically and socially.



Poudre School District (PDS) understands how critical families are to their students' success. By providing learning opportunities to Title I and linguistically diverse parents and families through a one-day conference, Parent Academy, staff and district leadership are able to connect with families, providing an example of how the district values family-school partnerships.

Parent Academy consisted of a one-day conference held at a local hotel with a general presentation on *Prevention and Response to Bullying* followed by three one-hour sessions. Parents enjoyed a continental breakfast as they checked in, and community partners set up tables for families to browse. Over the course of the day, families were able to choose one workshop per session, with many of the workshops being offered during multiple sessions so that families would not have to choose between important topics. Conference programs were available in English and Spanish, while interpretation was provided in workshops with other workshops presented in Spanish only. Topics included healthy communication, setting boundaries, wellness and learning, transition to high school, undocumented student college support, financial aid information, family and community partnering, and marijuana in Colorado and its impact on youth.

Family liaisons have important relationships with families and students. The Family Liaison Team in PDS was vital to the success of Parent Academy as they were the ones inviting and registering parents to the conference. Additionally, PSD has strong relationships with their community partners who were committed to sharing their knowledge and services with families facilitating workshops and having booths at the community fair. Sixteen community partners participated, ranging from Poudre River Public Library, CSU: Access Center, and La Familia (The Family Center), to name a few.

Over 200 parents attended Parent Academy, with 14 presenters and 33 staff. Following each session, parents filled out a survey to provide feedback for future Academies. The majority of parents found the workshops to have immediate applicable information, particularly in the area of communication with their children. Parents shared that they learned techniques to be better listeners, speak positively about school and education in front of their children, and help their children and themselves have a positive mindset. These “subtle” forms of family engagement are linked to positive student outcomes. Parents also asked that more workshops be offered throughout the year with topics covering preparing financially for college, suicide prevention, mental health, and drugs.

Parent Academy empowered diverse families to become more deeply engaged with their children's education by providing parents with opportunities to learn how they can support their student's success.

Parent Excursions to Colleges

Elkhart Elementary School

Aurora, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

At Elkhart Elementary School in Aurora, parents expressed a desire to know more about post-secondary options available for their children. This led to school staff planning and implementing Parent Excursions to Colleges for parents of fifth grade students. The goal of these excursions is to help families in the school community to better understand how to prepare their child for college and what other types of postsecondary options there are. Staff hoped that Parent Excursions to Colleges would encourage families to share what was learned with their children.

Those involved in the planning and implementing of the practice included the school principal; a lead teacher; The Learning Source, a family literacy program; APS Post-Secondary and Workforce Readiness Partner; City of Aurora Public Library; and directors from the identified colleges. The Family Liaison at Elkhart Elementary coordinated with the participating families, made sure all documents were in order from the college being visited, gave previews as to what families could expect and where the colleges are located, requested evaluations of the excursions, and provided opportunities for families to discuss the experience and what they learned. Each participating family member completed an evaluation, was able to debrief at a follow-up parent coffee event, and provided suggestions for future field trips.

Parent Excursions to Colleges raised the awareness of families about what post-secondary opportunities are available, what is required for graduation, what the prerequisites are for college applications, and the types of financial aid available. Elkhart Elementary found the excursions to be extremely successful. They shared that Parent Excursions to Colleges opened up conversations among parents, between parents and students, and between parents and the school about what needs to occur to make sure each child has the best secondary opportunity possible.

Freshman Parent Post-Secondary And Workforce Readiness Plan Training and Orientation

The Classical Academy
Colorado Springs, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

At The Classical Academy (TCA), post-secondary planning with students and families is prioritized as early as freshman year through the College and Career Connections Center. TCA has partnered with Naviance, a comprehensive K-12 college and career readiness platform, to support their Freshman Parent PWR (Post-Secondary and Workforce Readiness) Plan Training and Orientation. In TCA, it's called a PWR Plan and is represented by their own action figure, PWR Plan Man.

The goal of the PWR Plan is to create partnerships with families that support student learning and success. The PWR Plan empowers families to engage with their students' college or career planning. TCA hosts an introductory meeting for parents that highlights the tools available through Naviance and provides guidance on navigating College in Colorado, a state resource that helps students and families navigate planning, applying, and paying for college. At this meeting, dinner is provided. TCA shares with parents their students' learning style survey and interest inventory results, and school counselors discuss ways to support learning at home by sharing study skills and time management tips.

One tool Naviance provides to TCA is the Family Connections website. Students and families use this website to access online resources, communicate with school staff such as school counselors and teachers, and work on college and career readiness activities. Through Family Connections, students and families can create course plans, research colleges, request teacher recommendations, take personality assessments, and set personal and academic goals.

Following each career or college conversation in the classroom, TCA encourages family communication by sending "post chat" articles to students and families on the topics discussed in the classroom, tools used with the student, and a comparable tool for parents to complete. TCA also sends out "around the table" announcements that connect topics discussed in the classroom with real-world events and conversations.

After evaluating their partnership with Naviance, TCA learned that families would benefit from a reduced audience size that would allow for more engagement with the Family Connections website during the meetings. TCA recommends hosting meetings in an open computer lab, as not all families have access to smart phones or computer.

By having students and families begin thinking about career and college planning as soon as they begin high school, the PWR Plan at TCA encourages students to develop a deep knowledge of their strengths and interests. Such knowledge is further supported when families are included in the planning process.

Read to Me

Altura Elementary School

Aurora, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Supporting families in a variety of ways in reading to their child regularly is important to the staff at Altura Elementary School in Aurora. By hosting Academic Nights focused on reading, parents become engaged in reading with their child in ways that can be sustained at home.

Families were invited to Altura Elementary for the “Read to Me” event. Cookies and cocoa were offered, and every student that attended received a free book. Title I funds were used to purchase the refreshments, while community volunteers from the library, Reading Corp, and 5th and Charles supported the program with donations of books and/or time.

The atmosphere of Read to Me was fun and relaxed, while still contributing to the academic achievement of students by incorporating Altura Elementary’s Unified Improvement Plan goals. Evaluations of the event were based on a large number of people in attendance, as well as the positive comments shared with staff afterwards. Staff at Altura Elementary recommend mixing up family engagement programs and events, as doing the same thing every year can become less interesting to families and to students.

Study Club

Slater Elementary School

Denver, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

One goal at Slater Elementary School, located in Denver, is to engage with families to help students learn sustainable study and homework skills. With the help of family volunteers, the Study Club was born. Based on the belief that learning to learn is critical to student success, the Study Club goes beyond the traditional drop-in “homework club” model.

The Study Club was advertised with a send-home flyer over the summer prior to the school year, as well as on a tri-fold board for “Back to School Night.” The Family Engagement Liaison, Digital Teacher Librarian, and a parent volunteer also visited classrooms when school began to generate student interest in the club, and found that teachers were a big factor in student excitement and interest in the club. Staff hoped to have up to 30 students join Study Club; when over 60 students signed up, the program was expanded. Students were divided up by grade level with Kindergarten through Second Grade meeting in the computer lab and Third Grade through Sixth Grade meeting in the library. A volunteer campaign recruited nine family volunteers who signed up for specific days, with a few teachers volunteering an occasional hour after school as well. Additional volunteers included high school students, the Cafeteria Manager, and the night custodian.

There were a variety of goals associated with the Study Club. These included introducing students to study skills and habits to help them to eventually learn how to study on their own, informing families of good study habits, allowing time to read both fiction and non-fiction, providing additional homework help, and introducing additional learning and study activities through various computer programs. Other goals included providing a healthy snack to kick start student learning and building relationships with students and families by providing a comforting environment to make school feel like a safe place to be and learn.

Based on these goals, the Study Club agenda was adapted according to the specific grade levels and student need. Study skills were identified with the help of teachers and online resources such as Scholastic and Teaching.Monster.com. A free after school snack was provided through a USDA grant.

The Study Club staff and volunteers engage with parents by regularly sending home updates on what the Study Club is doing and how, as well as the particular skills being worked on. Parents are able to fill out a form on their hopes and areas of concern for their child, and phone calls home are made when specific issues arise. By creating a network of communication between all of those involved in the education of participating students, the Study Club supports student success by providing a continuum of support.

Yearlong Parent Coffee & Workshops

Virginia Court Elementary
Aurora, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

One goal at Virginia Court Elementary in Aurora is to ensure parents and students share high expectations. Staff was able to accomplish this by hosting workshops for parents on math, reading, writing, and parent involvement. Coffee was offered to all who attended.

Throughout the school year, Virginia Court provided opportunities for families to have a number of learning experiences to help support their child's academic achievement. Workshops were designed based on parents' suggestions of what their needs were and according to grade level, as well as what available staff could best support the experience.

Parent leaders, community partners, teachers, and staff were instrumental in making the workshop events at Virginia Court successful. The dedication of and communication between staff raised the expectations of those involved in planning of what they would be able to accomplish and offer to families.

Most of the workshops had a written evaluation component for parents to fill out. The Virginia Court principal, assistant principal, and coordinating staff reviewed the evaluations to determine if the needs of the parents had been met. Parent reports showed that some of the workshops were not as important to families as had been assumed, while other workshops had higher parent rankings.

The workshops resulted in an improvement in student academic achievement, better school attendance, and increased partnerships and trust with both families and staff. Staff at Virginia Court Elementary believe that partnerships at all levels begin and end at the school, and that it takes a village to make a successful and sustaining impact on student success.

Families First Workshops

Foster Elementary School

Arvada, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

The Family-School Partnership (FSP) team, made up of families and staff, at Foster Elementary School knows that the best way to engage with families is to find out what families want to know. The FSP team worked with families to identify workshop topics of interest to families, while the Family Engagement Liaison worked with a community non-profit organization, Families First, to put together a workshop series called Families First Workshops.

Workshop topics included Bullying, Self-Esteem, Punishment vs. Discipline: Positive Methods of Discipline, The Love of Reading and Learning, Communication: This is Not Just Talking, but also How to Listen!, and Parenting from the Heart: 5 Essential Tools for Raising Children. All workshop sessions were offered in both English and Spanish, allowing a greater number of families to come together and focus on the shared goal of student success. Workshops took place over a two-month period and were offered in both a morning and afternoon session.

The Families First Workshops were evaluated with the assistance of Families First. The FSP team learned that prior to offering the workshops, families reported feeling lost and unsure of who to ask for parenting advice. After attending the Families First Workshops, families shared that they appreciated the support and guidance they received from other families and the facilitators. Families also reported positive changes in their daily lives that were directly related to what they learned in the workshops.

The FSP team recommends beginning registration two months prior to the start of the workshops to ensure high attendance, and to use marketing strategies in various languages to recruit a greater number of families.

One goal of the Families First Workshops is to support families by bringing in topical-based workshops based on family interest; as such, it was critical to have families identify the areas of need rather than the school staff. The other goal of the Families First Workshops is to collaborate with families on student success. By increasing the knowledge and skills of families to support student learning in the home, the Families First Workshops benefitted students both at home and at school.

Family Support Group

Fitzmorris Elementary

Arvada, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

For families of students on the Autism Spectrum Disorder and with other disabilities, supporting one another in a welcoming and safe environment can provide an opportunity for families to connect and to more deeply understand their students' learning and progress. At Fitzmorris Elementary, the need for such support was recognized by a family leader who then approached the Family Engagement Liaison with the idea. The result, The Family Support Group, provides families with an opportunity to develop relationships with other families whom they can share their challenges and successes with.

Together, the family leader and the Family Engagement Liaison created a framework that included topics for the group and recruitment strategies. They made sure this framework aligned with school policy and processes, as well as adhered to confidentiality requirements around students with special needs. Additionally, they set up numerous meetings with the school principal to ensure the group goals aligned with the school's needs.

As Fitzmorris Elementary has an Autism Lab, many families of students with autism participated in The Family Support group, although it was offered to any family in the school with a child with a disability. The group met once a month for an hour to discuss the pre-designated topic and listen and support one another. The group then identified common areas in need of more discussion and created a list of topics they wanted to invite guest speakers to present on, such as the Autism Society and other support services. Presenters also provided families with activities they could do at home with their children and information on other resources. The family leader planned and implemented all sessions, while the liaison attended each meeting and helped with the logistics of the group. After each meeting, the family leader and the liaison met to debrief by identifying areas of challenge and areas of success.

It took time to build trust between the families, but staff report that by the third meeting, parents had begun to feel comfortable discussing their concerns and sharing strategies for supporting their students. Over time, the group agreed to open the meetings to all families in the district that have a student with a disability. While this increased the size of the group, they were able to maintain the necessary level of trust. The family leader also reached out to families who did not consistently attend—simply by doing so increased these families' attendance.

Students benefited from The Family Support Group as the participating families were able to try new strategies at home, as well as collaborate with teachers to advocate for their students' special needs. The school benefitted from The Family Support Group as participation increased families' confidence in ways they could support their child both in school and with learning activities at home.

Standard 4—Speaking Up for Every Child

The Parenting Journey

Rifle Middle School

Rifle, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Connecting with other parents on parenting challenges and successes is an empowering way for schools to get parents and families to collaborate with one another and with the school. Rifle Middle School in Rifle, Colorado is using The Parenting Journey curriculum to do just that.

The Parenting Journey is a twelve-week curriculum best facilitated in a group no larger than 10. Each session is two-hours long. In a safe and nurturing small group environment, parents have the opportunity to reflect on their strengths, examine the way they were parented, make decisions about what they want to keep and/or change, and set goals (either personal, parenting, or family). Parents also learn ways to take care of themselves to be a more present and patient parent. Over the course of the twelve weeks, parents build relationships with each other that may continue to form a base of support long after the course is finished.

The principal and assistant principal at Rifle Middle school planned and implemented The Parenting Journey with the assistance of the bilingual parent liaison. Each session builds on the previous week's discussion, and so staff found it crucial to have parents commit to the whole 12 weeks. Parents also may feel uncomfortable sharing personal information when others are dropping in and out—emphasizing consistent attendance can insure that The Parenting Journey sessions are a safe place to share.

Rifle Middle School hosted one group in the fall and one in the spring. Staff recommend providing meals and childcare so that parents feel nurtured. For the first 45 minutes of each session, the group eats dinner together and discusses four “ritual questions:” 1) Describe one thing you did this past week to take care of yourself and how it affected your parenting; 2) Describe one positive interaction you had with someone this week; 3) Describe a situation you handled well this week and are proud of; and 4) Describe a situation you wish you had handled differently. Following dinner, there is a learning activity and discussion.

The Parenting Journey originated in Somerville, MA and is based on the family systems principle that no individual exists in isolation. Rifle Middle School staff emphasize the importance of spending the money on sending staff to Boston, MA to attend the weeklong facilitator training—they believe beginning with trained facilitators is critical to the success of The Parenting Journey. This was the largest expense associated with the program.

By helping parents take care of themselves, they feel better equipped to take care of the needs of their children. Parents who have participated in The Parenting Journey at Rifle Middle School share that they feel more positively about the school and more connected to the school. Additionally, they expressed feeling more confident in themselves and that they are not alone in parenting.

Family-School Partnership

Team

Jefferson County Public Schools
Golden, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

In Jefferson County Public School district, the Title I Family School Partnership (FSP) team work side-by-side with families and school staff to identify and implement ways to improve their Title I schools. The goals of the FSP team is to refine the family engagement policy in a way that is relevant and meaningful to both families and staff; to solicit input from families regarding the Title I budget; to build trusting relationships between families, school staff, and district staff; to have families and staff build partnerships and collaborate on specific family engagement areas; and to build the leadership skills of families and staff.

Monthly FSP Team meetings are scheduled for two hours in the evening at various schools throughout the district. Child care, dinner, and interpretation services are provided, and all documents are offered in both English and Spanish. Participants are comprised of Family Engagement Liaisons, parent representatives, and school and district staff. Parent representatives were provided with a folder that included the yearly plan, a FSP brochure with a description of the representative role, and paper for note taking.

The first hour of the meeting is designated for eating dinner together, casual conversation, and families checking students into the childcare area. The second hour is a more formal meeting, with a short welcome, overview of previous meetings, and a review of the evening's agenda. Participants then break up into small groups to discuss and plan specific family engagement plans based on the agenda items. One group member facilitates the discussion, while another records the conversation and themes.

Facilitators, typically Family Engagement Liaisons and a few parents, were trained on facilitation skills such as active listening, staying objective, and paraphrasing prior to the meetings. All recorded notes were given to the research and assessment team to identify themes and provide support in interpreting the information. In the 2015-2016 school year, seven meetings took place.

Each group created and began implementation of an action based on a particular area's needs. These action plans included afterschool homework clubs at each school, improving nutrition in school food services, increasing family engagement, and academically-based afterschool programs. Formal budget recommendations were submitted that will be included in the 2016-2017 Consolidated Application. Additionally, formal policy recommendations were used to create a new draft policy to be submitted to the JeffCo Board of Education for final approval. Based on the ongoing assessment of the FSP team meetings by the Research and Assessment Team, refinements will be made prior to the new school year.

The JeffCo staff have found that the success of this model relies on including the following components: a small group discussion format; the preparation and training of facilitators; families must be able to see changes related to their feedback; provision of childcare, dinner, interpretation services, and translated documents; and leadership development for both staff and parents.

Parent Survey on Student Engagement

Louisville Middle School
Louisville, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Parent surveys are one way to give your parent community an avenue to share their perspectives while allowing the school staff to target areas in which they are looking for feedback. Louisville Middle School distributes a comprehensive Parent Survey on Student Engagement at the end of the first semester, with shorter parent surveys sent out multiple times a year.

The surveys are quick and efficient way to a school to collect data that is then used in decision-making. Those involved in the survey process include building administrators, front office staff, parent volunteer coordinator, parent volunteers, PTA/PTO, and the parent community. It takes about two hours to create the survey, and two hours to evaluate the data and decide what the next steps should be.

There are four steps involved in developing and utilizing a Parent Survey on Student Engagement. Step 1 is to utilize school decision-making bodies (teacher leadership and SAC) to create/revise the survey—surveys are updated every day as schools should be looking for different or expanded information from parents. Step 2 is to send the survey to all households through School Messenger. A follow-up link should be sent a week later to increase responses. Step 3 is to gather results and share meta-data via graphs with the parent community, first in SAC and then in the school bulletin. It's important to share the same data with teaching staff prior to sending it out to the parent community and to keep parent comments with teachers' names internal as to not violate confidentiality. Step 4 is to discuss the results of the survey with the school's decision-making bodies and to act on the results.

Surveys provide clues as to how many parents are engaged with the school—the better response rate, the greater the number of engaged parents! Data also provides tracking information on the students to see what clubs, sports, and other school activities/organizations they are involved with. The Parent Survey on Student Engagement helps Louisville Middle school staff ensure that all students feel connected to school, thus promoting students' social-emotional needs and well-being.

School-Family-Student Compact

Stein (Emory) Elementary School
Lakewood, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

At Stein (Emory) Elementary in Lakewood, school staff, family members, and students partnered to create the School-Family-Student Compact, a document that outlines the responsibilities of all stakeholders in supporting the academic achievement and positive behavior of the students. The School-Family-Student Compact demonstrates the commitment to student success by having everyone involved in the education of students.

The need for the School-Family-Student Compact was recognized by the Family Engagement Team, comprised of six family members, who met regularly and discussed different ways that families could be more engaged with the school and feel more welcomed as active participants of the school community. The Family Engagement Team invited a variety of people to collaborate on the compact. The final working group included: two teachers, one from Kindergarten and one from sixth grade; one community partner, Metro Community Provider Network; one school counselor; one family liaison; one school clinic aid; five school family members, two of whom were English speaking only, two of whom were bilingual, and one of whom spoke only Spanish; two administrators; and seven students, one student per K-6 grade level.

Over the course of three initial meetings, the team (minus the students) studied the previous year's family compact, a high school's family compact, and a mock compact called 'Nutmeg.' During these meetings, the team discovered that the previous compact had little family or student input. The team decided that for the compact to be used as a tool for student learning, more collaboration from all parties, including the students, was needed. They also discussed what was critical to include, what could be excluded, using family-friendly language, and having it translated to Spanish and Vietnamese. Following these three initial meetings, the families and the Family Engagement Liaison continued to meet weekly to complete the compact. The families then presented a draft of the compact to the whole group to obtain feedback, particularly from teachers and students. This process allowed the families to feel ownership over and responsibility for the School-Family-Student Compact and the students' education, while providing everyone involved an experience of coordination, collaboration, power-sharing, and successful partnering.

The Family Engagement Team learned that it is important to clearly define the roles of each person, such as who is a decision maker, who is a facilitator, who is a provider of input, and who is an editor. They recommend 9 steps in creating a document such as the School-Family-Student Compact: (1) Identify families, teachers, staff, and community members willing to work together and ask for teachers to nominate students with an interest in working on the compact; (2) provide the necessary amenities for the group to work (childcare, translation, water, etc.); (3) find times that work for everyone to meet; (4) research other schools' family compacts; (5) have an open mind, be respectful of other's opinions and work together to find an agreeable point; (6) understand that there is no wrong idea, and everyone brings something to the table; (7) read and edit continuously; (8) present it to a community based team for feedback; and (9) translate to any necessary languages and send to the printing department.

Caminos Partnership Latino

Business Luncheon

Fort Collins High School

Fort Collins, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

At Fort Collins High School, partnering with El Centro at Colorado State University to increase the academic achievement of bilingual and predominantly native Spanish speaking students has proven to be a success. This partnership exposes high school students in the Spanish Literacy classes to a variety of post-secondary options through experiential learning and career exploration activities. Such activities facilitate the transition after graduation for students with traditionally limited resources to access such opportunities. Fort Collins High School and El Centro named their innovative program *Caminos*. The goal of *Caminos* is to encourage and motivate students to take ownership of their education. The culminating activity of *Caminos* is the *Caminos* Partnership Latino Business Luncheon, which aims to connect the students in the Spanish Literacy classes to successful Latinos in the community.

Successful Latino professionals from the community were invited to participate in an informal business luncheon at Fort Collins High School. Professionals were contacted through personal phone calls or email. Guests included veterinarians, engineers, computer programmers, directors of non-profits, detectives, lawyers, healthcare providers, and business owners, among others. Other invitees included school district administrators, CSU partners, and Fort Collins High School's graduating Latinos accepted to CSU.

Nametags were provided and students were seated with a professional with a career of interest to them. Lunch was prepared by the culinary arts classes, and while dining, students and professionals engaged in relevant, meaningful conversation. Students had the opportunity to ask questions about high school preparation, post-secondary options, and other career-related topics. Guests were able to share their personal stories and give students with similar career interests professional advice. A keynote speaker was invited from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), who gave a powerful, motivational speech encouraging students to define their dream and to never let anyone tell them that they couldn't achieve that dream.

The Family Liaison and the Assistant Principal collaborated with the Spanish Literacy teachers and CSU partners in planning, implementing, and evaluating the *Caminos* Partnership Business Luncheon. Following the luncheon, students reported having more motivation to improve their grades, involve themselves more in school and community activities, and to take more rigorous classes relating to career goals.

Staff recommend that students complete a career interest survey before community members are invited so that a sufficient number of guests are invited that match student career choices. Staff also found that community members were very willing to support young Latino students and considered it giving back to their community.

Collaborative Counseling

Girls Athletic Leadership Schools

Denver, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

At Girls Athletic Leadership Schools in Denver, the unique Counseling Department brings creative arts and mindfulness-based and traditional counseling approaches to the school community. The department is founded on a somatic, mind-body orientation to mental health. Counselors develop strong relationships with families and community agencies to provide resources and referrals for crisis and therapeutic support, as well as afterschool and summer activities. The Counseling Department also offers an adoptive parents support group and a group for parents of gender non-conforming students. Counselors work closely with the school social worker on truancy issues and to access emergency family assistance when needed. Counselors also work closely with the school psychologists on data collection for evaluation. Such collaboration insures coordination of consistent care for students and families.

The goal of the Counseling Department is to provide innovative social and emotional support to students so that they can more fully access their education. In alignment with the school's movement-based school pedagogy, different staff members are trained in Dance/Movement Therapy, Art Therapy, Wilderness Therapy, and mindfulness-based practices. Counselors address a range of issues including crisis support, depression, anxiety, family stressors, relationship challenges, grief and loss, sexual orientation and gender identity, substance use and prevention, sexual health, skills for emotion regulation, and academic focus and organization. Counselors also support teachers in the classroom when academic content may be emotionally overwhelming or when an individual student's emotional state is impeding access to their education. For students with transient or chronic stressors, the support of a trusted adult outside of the classroom can help them gain the necessary skills to navigate life challenges and stay engaged in their education.

At the end of each school year, data is collected on the number of students served, the range of issues addressed, supplemental supportive services, academic progress, and student retention. Additional programming is then developed from this review, including staff training, parent education and support groups, and groups in areas such as relationship skills and substance use prevention.

When implementing such an innovative counseling program, the Counseling Department staff at GALS highlights the importance of have the support of school leadership. Additionally, developing partnerships with university master's degree programs can be crucial for insuring you can provide enough support staff to students and families, and as such you must be sure you can meet CACREP and other internship guidelines for interns. Finally, ongoing communication and relationship building with teachers and families while maintaining the confidentiality of the students is critical in order for such a program to increase student engagement and success.

Crawford Community Center

Crawford Elementary School

Aurora, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Opening up your school for community use is an important way to build strong relationships with both families and the local community. By using Title III funds, asking for donations, and fundraising, Crawford Elementary School in Aurora is able to turn the school building into the Community Center after school.

The Crawford Elementary School Community Center is open to businesses and organizations that offer classes to families and students. The majority of classes are offered free of charge. The Community Liaison at Crawford Elementary attends a variety of meetings throughout the local community and offers building space to those interested. The Family Liaison and school administrators are also involved in the planning and implementation of the Community Center. Crawford Elementary also partnered with local churches, the Asian-Pacific Center, Toys for Tots, Sam's Club, and the Colorado Rapids.

While evaluation of the Crawford Elementary School Community Center is ongoing, it appears to be successful based on the participation of Crawford families and the consistent use of the building space after school.

Staff at Crawford Elementary have found that by providing access to the community for programs after school that benefit both Crawford and the community, communication between staff and families and staff and community partners has improved. Involving parents in the school in this way enhances how both the school and student learning is perceived, and strengthens the relationships between the different stakeholders.

Increasing family engagement and student success can be most easily done when families can see the benefits of a program. Harrison School District Two partnered with LiveWell Colorado Springs and the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs to implement an after-school program titled Keep It Moving! (KIM) at five elementary schools. By providing fun physical activity opportunities and an after-school snack, more families were willing to join KIM and have their students participate in the structured and unstructured physical activity program. The staff in Harrison School District Two understand the importance of using physical activity and nutritious snacks as a marketing tool for programs that support after-school learning.

KIM provides an affordable and accessible opportunity for students to engage in physical activity, have access to a healthy snack, and to homework assistance. Such a program enforces the link between health and academic performance. The KIM program in Harrison School District Two provided third, fourth, and fifth grade disadvantaged students with more than 20 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, aligning with current physical activity guidelines.

To support the creation of the program, it is important to gain the support of administrators who recognize the value that an after-school physical activity program provides for students and their families. Such support will increase buy-in from administrators for sustainability, as well as for funding. Harrison School District Two prioritized KIM in each individual building's activity fund. The facilitator and helper stipend then comes from each building. Schools can then build relationships with local community partners to recruit volunteers to help run the program, who can represent strong role models for students.

In Harrison School District Two, 89% of parents whose child participated in the program reported the child was more physically active, while only 16% of parents with non-participating children reported more physical activity. This data suggests that when an after-school program such as KIM is implemented in schools with disadvantaged children who traditionally have low activity levels, the physical health and wellness of those children increases, which is crucial for the academic engagement and success of all students.

Parent Engagement Network

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

For 15 years, Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) has partnered with the Parent Engagement Network (PEN), a parent organization, to provide education, support, and resources around a variety of issues impacting the youth and families in the Boulder County. Based on research findings that show children with connected and engaged parents are more likely to be involved in fewer risk-taking behaviors, as well as more likely to be resilient in the face of life's challenges, PEN is a universal prevention program that provides education, resources, and support to youth and families throughout BVSD.

Volunteer parents spearhead all phases of development, implementation, and evaluation of PEN, in collaboration with BVSD administration. Annual letters are sent to principals in BVSD outlining the opportunities PEN offers to schools, parents, staff, and the community. PEN School teams of parent volunteers are organized in the majority of elementary, middle, and high schools in BVSD, and collaborate with the principal, school counselors, and staff throughout the year to create action plans focused on improving the school climate to support student success.

The goals of PEN are to increase parent engagement in the home, school, and community contexts in which pre-kindergarten through 12th grade families interact; to support parents in acquiring the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to enhance foundational parenting competencies, build relationships, engage in personal development, and be resourceful in their parenting; collaborate with organizations and professionals to deliver strength-based programming that supports positive youth development and decreases risk-taking behavior in youth; and to respond to the changing individual, school, and community level parent needs.

PEN develops and sponsors educational events that address current trends and parenting issues. Topics range from risk behaviors such as self-harm, eating disorders, depression, suicide prevention, and bullying, to preventative tips on raising resilient youth, building positive family relationships, fostering a healthy self-image, communication skills, and managing stress and anxiety. Programs are translated and interpreted to support the growing Latino population in Boulder County.

Two evaluation surveys are consistently used to direct programs and to evaluate program and community involvement effectiveness and parent volunteer training for upcoming school years. PEN presentations are continuously rated as being high quality by those who attend PEN community parent education presentations. Attendees report the PEN presentations serve a variety of needs.

The school based parent engagement model of PEN is replicable, customizable, flexible, and sustainable. Such a model can be adapted to fit the needs of the individual setting and community. PEN programs engage, educate, and empower parents in developing the physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and mental health, well-being and safety of youth, families, and communities.

An important piece of family, school, and community partnering is empowering families to help support their children's basic needs. At Pleasant View Elementary, this is accomplished through The Miracle Shop, a gift shop that provides holiday gifts and toys for families in need. By creating an opportunity for families to choose which toys and gifts to purchase for their children for a suggested donation of 50 cents to \$2, families are empowered to donate at their financial comfort level.

Pleasant View Elementary sought to change the dynamics of the traditional charity model of a community member buying a suggested toy for an anonymous girl or boy. By instead having a 'suggested donation' priced gift shop, a family is able to choose gifts for their own children, which in turn raises the family's level of dignity, particularly for parents who struggle with the idea of not being able to provide for their children. Pleasant View Elementary's Family Engagement Liaison, principal, families, and community partners collaborated on how to do things differently, and The Miracle Shop was born using school space.

Donated toys and gifts are still collected from community members, with lists of popular toys and gifts being sent to participating organizations. As families choose gifts, they slip their donation into a box. This process ensures that no one else can see how much an individual is donating. The Miracle Shop is run by family volunteers who are paid in 'Miracle Bucks' at \$9 an hour (individuals are limited to two paid hours). The 'Miracle Bucks' can then be used to purchase items in the shop, further offsetting the cost a family would otherwise use. Individuals who run the shop build their customer service and organization skills as they organize and restock toys. By having family volunteers as shop associates, a sense of community is created.

For families in emergency situations, a 'promise grant' (a one-time only request of no more than \$100) of collected donations is available. Requests are made through the school and the Family Engagement Liaison. Each request is reviewed and approved by a committee of Rotary members. This process then becomes an opportunity to have deeper conversations on what other resources the family is in need of and has access to.

Each year, The Miracle Shop is assessed in focus meetings to determine how to make it better. One outcome of these meetings was the addition of the 'Miracle Bucks' for shop associates. When implementing a practice such as The Miracle Shop, Pleasant View Elementary staff recommend talking to community partners and families about the value of switching from the traditional holiday charity gift giving to a new tradition that empowers families and encourages their participation.

Families know their children best, and being able to choose the perfect toy or gift for them engages families and helps them feel like part of the process during the holidays. Students then benefit from having involved parents.

Triad Early Childhood PTA

Clear Creek, Gilpin, and Jefferson Counties
CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

One way of increasing family engagement and leadership is to start early. The Triad Early Childhood Council, the Early Childhood Council for the counties of Clear Creek, Gilpin, and Jefferson, did just that, and implemented the Triad Early Childhood PTA. The goal of the PTA is to helping parents and families of children aged 0-5 who are cared for at licensed child care and preschool sites get an early experience with family engagement and leadership.

Members of the Triad Early Childhood Council and its key staff, including the Executive Director and the School Readiness and Transition Specialist, began the planning and implementation of the Triad Early Childhood PTA by first contacting the childcare and preschool sites participating in the School Readiness Quality Improvement Program. These sites were asked to recommend parents, who would then attend an organizational meeting. The Jefferson County Council PTA facilitated the organizational meeting, and assigned two of its board members to provide assistance.

Membership in the Triad Early Childhood PTA is open to anyone in the Triad area (Clear Creek, Gilpin, and Jefferson counties) who supports the mission and purposes of PTA and who is interested in increasing engagement for families of young children. The Triad Early Childhood Council sponsors PTA memberships for any families who are not able to afford the cost of dues. Because the Triad Early Childhood PTA unit is not based in school like most PTAs, connecting with targeted parents must be done by reaching out to the child care and preschool providers. A major incentive for providers to encourage families to join is that part of the licensing requirements for all licensed early childhood sites is to promote family engagement.

While the Triad Early Childhood PTA has only been in existence for a few months, the Triad Early Childhood Council and the Jefferson County Council PTA will do an ongoing evaluation. To some extent, the child care providers' evaluations will show in their rating in the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System. Additionally, the growth of membership in the Triad Early Childhood PTA and the future involvement of its members in PTA and in the K-12 system will be evaluated.

One direct outcome of the Triad Early Childhood PTA will likely be evidenced by the licensed childcare and preschool sites receiving higher ratings in the Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System. Additionally, the Triad Early Childhood Council knows that engaged parents and families are critical to student success, and that early participation in PTA will lead to increased involvement in the K-12 system, and lead to better student achievement.