

Improving Latino Parent Involvement through Home Visits

Johnson Elementary School

Fort Collins, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Johnson Elementary School staff have established many activities over the years to strengthen home-school collaboration and culture, including positive phone calls home, text messages, and parent teacher conferences. During the 2016-17 school year, staff decided to organize more opportunities for Latino parents to partner with school personnel. As a result, staff started a six-month home visit program focusing on ELL students and their families.

During the first parent meeting held in September, staff distributed a calendar for parents to choose the time and date for a home visit. The visits were offered to all 23 English Language Learners' students, regardless of their academic performance or behavior issues so the visits were not associated with problems or disciplinary actions. All the families had at least one bilingual parent and requested at the beginning of the school year that all school communication be in Spanish, their native language.

Once all families were scheduled, the family liaison sent an email to the school's staff letting them know about the upcoming conferences and visits. A week before the home visit, the family liaison met with each classroom teacher and with the Integrated Services teachers when applicable. Most of them added materials to be included to the backpack that each family would receive during the visit (number lines, lined paper, flashcards, etc.). Teacher feedback and information about the students was crucial to find the appropriate materials and activities to bring to each home visit.

The backpacks were donated, and the supplies cost a total of \$10-15 per backpack (example of supplies: dice, cookie trays, shaving cream, notebooks, number lines, 100s charts, pencils, crayons, flashcards, card decks, manipulatives, workbooks, chalk, books in Spanish, etc.). During the visit, parents and family liaison talked about the teacher's feedback, and all the contents in the backpack. All the questions and concerns from the parents were written down (and later shared with the student's teacher). Visits lasted between 50-90 minutes.

In the short two years of implementation, Johnson Elementary has already seen the positive impact of home visits. Teachers report that students turn-in homework more than they used to. Students read more at home and engage in practicing skills regularly with their parents. Parents check backpacks more often, communication is more effective, and teachers sent more communications in Spanish. Even if teachers didn't participate during the home visits, for the first time Johnson had 100% attendance at parent-teacher conferences!