

Visiting our Families

Poudre High School

Fort Collins, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Poudre High School serves the largest population of newcomer and Hispanic students in the Poudre School District. In order to build positive home-school relationships and create an inclusive culture within the school, Poudre High implements the Visiting our Families program. This practice provides staff with the opportunity to get to know families in their own environment, hear their experiences, hopes, successes, and the struggles of living in a new country.

Visiting our Families takes place twice per semester, allowing classroom teachers the ability to choose when they can attend. This is a voluntary activity and teachers must take time off of their regular schedule to participate.

The Family Liaison selects two families to host for each opportunity. One family will host lunch and the other one a dessert. The teacher group is regularly no more than six people. The Family Liaison checks on the availability with families two weeks in advance. When the Family Liaison asks the family to host, they explain the goals of the visit, letting them know they can feel free to share and ask questions of the visitors as they feel comfortable.

Once the date is confirmed, the Family Liaison sends an email to teachers attending and gives them the name of the students and parents, and the family's address. Additionally, the Family Liaison gives them topics, ideas and recommendations of conversation topics, so they may enjoy and benefit from this opportunity. Host families receive a grocery gift card and a plant as a thank you at the end of the visit.

Students, families, and staff have all remarked about the evident benefits of Visiting our Families. Students report having more open communication channels with teachers, as well as more positive conversations with their parents. Family feedback indicates a deeper trust in teachers, increased opportunities to ask questions, and a feeling of support from the school. Finally, teachers report a better understanding of families' cultures and a recognition of the assets parents bring to the home-school partnership.

Poudre High School's family liaisons recommend using the website [Story Corps](#) to create a list of questions to use during the home visit. The liaisons also comment: "The best part is that we notice teachers spreading the word to others colleagues. Buy-in is important for the growth and sustainability of this initiative and so far, its future looks very promising!"