

Robust Support in Early Childhood Entry Points

Colorado Springs Schools D11

Colorado Springs, CO

The District 11 Early Childhood Education program is committed to building an ecosystem of support for families of young children, and creating systems to remove barriers that can impact access to early childhood services and supports. Enrolling a child in school often can be overwhelming for parents, especially when navigating the additional complexity and anxiety associated with undergoing an evaluation for special education services. To improve ease of access through robust and varied communication, simplified processes, and emphasis on building human connections as a part of the process, District 11 employed a variety of support practices.



This was a collaborative effort of the Director of the Early Childhood program and the Early Childhood Community Liaison working proactively with Child Find Coordinators.

Communication regarding next-steps, appointment reminders, and how to reach out with questions was provided to families in their preferred language via email, text messages, and phone calls. When the Early Childhood Education Office, or the family, identified a need for increased support, the Community Liaison provided more direct support through either home visits or in-office appointments. During these in-person meetings, the Community Liaison provided the technology and the step-by-step support to ensure the necessary processes were successfully completed. Interpreters were always included when appropriate.

One parent shared, "I would like to commend your staff on the hospitality and kindness they offered to myself and my daughter during the evaluation process for early development and IEP placement." Another shared that although she was initially overwhelmed with the process and the amount of people in the room, she quickly realized they were focusing on her daughter as a whole child and she now feels like she has a team supporting both family and child.

When a higher layer of support is needed for families experiencing apprehension as a barrier, or who need answers to more technical questions regarding the evaluation process, a meeting with the Child Find Coordinator was offered. From D11's perspective, the primary intention of meetings with the Child Find Coordinator was to build trust between families and the district, empower families to feel confident in supporting the needs of their child, and reduce any anxiety related to engaging in the special education evaluation process.