

Co-Created FAQ Document

Eisenhower Elementary School

Boulder, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education



Eisenhower Elementary School found that a communication gap persisted with underrepresented families due to not sharing information in families' preferred languages and communicating only by email. Many parents expressed they were not aware of opportunities (like after school classes) and families had challenges around attendance and discipline because they were not informed adequately about the school's policy. At a Family Educators Together (FET) meeting, parents voiced on several occasions that they were not aware of the school's approach around a host of topics (i.e., can I come to lunch?, what volunteer opportunities are there?, who on the staff is bilingual?). Therefore, the goal was to equip families with an array of information about every aspect of the school so that families could more easily access opportunities and know how to navigate their child's learning at the school. The FET team co-created a FAQ tool that could be translated into any language needed and allow families access to necessary school information. The steps to creating the FAQ sheet were:

1. Parents were asked in small groups to come up with questions or general themes of information they would like to know, including information on discipline, bullying, and after school classes.
2. The principal and FET team leaders generated answers to the questions and had the answers translated in all needed languages.
3. The FET team blended small groups of educators and families to review the questions and answers, paying close attention to language (i.e., is it clear? Is it too much info? Is it edu-speak?).
4. The FET team leaders took the feedback and created a polished version of the document.
5. The FAQ sheet was distributed through multiple pathways including printing and mailing it; distributing it during Back to School Night; texting via Talking Points; and QR codes placed on newsletters, emails, and the school website.

Using the FAQ sheet, families became much more informed about every facet of the school culture and practices. They were able to be more included in the school community and advocate for their child in accessing opportunities they historically did not know about. As a result, parents felt more connected and more informed about how the school operates, and more confident in reaching out to staff.

Anecdotally, families shared the FAQ sheet was an incredible tool to help them understand more about how the school operates and enable them to feel safe, comfortable, and knowledgeable in partnering with the school. Parents even suggested a new club and engaged in new leadership roles. The FAQ process has been replicated by five additional schools in the district. One main challenge was helping the principal find time to generate answers to the questions before the next FET meeting. Another challenge was trying to determine how many and which languages the FAQ sheet needed to be translated to. The FET team initially waited for parents to request the FAQ sheet in their native language. Next year, the team will be proactive and find the appropriate languages from the school roster.

The FAQ sheet is an easy and relatively quick high-leverage FSCP practice. It does not involve more than two rounds of co-created collaboration between families and staff. It helps to have a clear team or committee that can spearhead the work and get the viewpoints of a diverse array of underrepresented families. Staff should also participate in these conversations because there may be a topic that families leave off simply for not being in the know.

Standard 2 — Communicating Effectively
Essential Element 3— Design Capacity Building Opportunities