

Parent Academy for Student Success (PASS)

Westminster Public Schools

Westminster, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

The Parent Academy for Student Success (PASS) was created to help families better support their children on their education journey. Westminster Public Schools (WPS) has a significant number of parents who did not graduate from high school and many who are unaware of the post-secondary opportunities available to their children. PASS was created in 2017 by the district's Department of Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Development. It was modeled after the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) founded in California in 1987. A team of educators from WPS witnessed PIQE in action and were inspired to create PASS for families in their community. The Board of Education also took a very hands-on approach in promoting the program and attending graduation ceremonies.

PASS was first implemented at the high school and middle school levels. However, due to the success and popularity of the program, it has now been adapted to the elementary level. Parents and guardians attend a nine-week program that offers a flexible schedule and free childcare so families can, in essence, "go back to school." PASS also offers parenting skills for those who seek assistance. As of the summer of 2023, five hundred parents have graduated from PASS, impacting more than one thousand students.

The program is evaluated by pre- and post-program surveys completed by participating parents. The high school graduation rate for students from participating families increased an estimated 40 percent. In addition, college enrollment increased by approximately 20 percent with students taking more rigorous college preparatory classes. Students also had increased attendance rates. In addition, parents and guardians shared powerful and emotional stories about the positive impact the program had not only on their students' academics, but on their own sense of confidence and purpose for the entire family.

The PASS program was so popular in the beginning that the demand for the program outpaced the district's ability to deliver services. To help solve this problem, WPS was able to develop important partnerships to support the program. For example, the Westminster Rotary Club celebrated graduates by donating refurbished computers to parents who finished the program.

Board of Education member Christine Martinez helped the families celebrate graduation in Spring 2023, telling parents, "Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to put your kids first. Believe me, they feel it, we all feel it."

"I fell through the cracks of the education system. During the first class I learned about PASS and all it had to offer. I was moved to tears," said parent Denise McGrath, who struggled in school because of undiagnosed attention deficit disorder. McGrath feared she wouldn't be able to support her children in school, but through PASS she learned how to help them.

