

Caminos Partnership Latino

Business Luncheon

Fort Collins High School

Fort Collins, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

At Fort Collins High School, partnering with El Centro at Colorado State University to increase the academic achievement of bilingual and predominantly native Spanish speaking students has proven to be a success. This partnership exposes high school students in the Spanish Literacy classes to a variety of post-secondary options through experiential learning and career exploration activities. Such activities facilitate the transition after graduation for students with traditionally limited resources to access such opportunities. Fort Collins High School and El Centro named their innovative program *Caminos*. The goal of *Caminos* is to encourage and motivate students to take ownership of their education. The culminating activity of *Caminos* is the *Caminos* Partnership Latino Business Luncheon, which aims to connect the students in the Spanish Literacy classes to successful Latinos in the community.

Successful Latino professionals from the community were invited to participate in an informal business luncheon at Fort Collins High School. Professionals were contacted through personal phone calls or email. Guests included veterinarians, engineers, computer programmers, directors of non-profits, detectives, lawyers, healthcare providers, and business owners, among others. Other invitees included school district administrators, CSU partners, and Fort Collins High School's graduating Latinos accepted to CSU.

Nametags were provided and students were seated with a professional with a career of interest to them. Lunch was prepared by the culinary arts classes, and while dining, students and professionals engaged in relevant, meaningful conversation. Students had the opportunity to ask questions about high school preparation, post-secondary options, and other career-related topics. Guests were able to share their personal stories and give students with similar career interests professional advice. A keynote speaker was invited from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), who gave a powerful, motivational speech encouraging students to define their dream and to never let anyone tell them that they couldn't achieve that dream.

The Family Liaison and the Assistant Principal collaborated with the Spanish Literacy teachers and CSU partners in planning, implementing, and evaluating the *Caminos* Partnership Business Luncheon. Following the luncheon, students reported having more motivation to improve their grades, involve themselves more in school and community activities, and to take more rigorous classes relating to career goals.

Staff recommend that students complete a career interest survey before community members are invited so that a sufficient number of guests are invited that match student career choices. Staff also found that community members were very willing to support young Latino students and considered it giving back to their community.