

# Environmental Scan

## Lincoln Elementary School

### Loveland, CO



Thompson School District (TSD) believes in creating a welcoming environment, a feeling of hope, and a sense of belonging, as delineated by Focus Area #2 of the current Strategic Plan “Strive 2025.” Ensuring representative, inclusive, and supportive learning environments is a priority at TSD. In order to determine how welcoming the environment at TSD schools truly is, the Family, School, and Community Partnership (FSCP) Specialist at Lincoln Elementary School developed an Environmental Scan. Research shows how classroom organization, cleanliness, cultural representation, and availability of resources can enhance the learning experience and boost student achievement. School and classroom environment can affect a student’s academic progress by as much as 25%. TSD hopes their buildings, from the lobby to the classrooms, encourage a welcoming and safe environment that represents each student.

The FSCP specialist at Lincoln Elementary School led the FSCP team in the creation of a survey form that serves as an environmental scan tool, rating the school environment on criteria such as inclusive representation, organization, clear signage, positive and consistent messaging, and availability of resources. The survey is available in English and Spanish and implemented into practice at Lincoln Elementary School. The environmental scan, completed by staff members and families, will be used to inform improvements to ensure welcoming, inclusive environments at Lincoln.

The tool begins with a pre-assessment to establish a baseline, then includes sections for stakeholders to provide feedback on the building grounds, lobby/main office, hallways, classrooms, and website. Participating stakeholders share their perceptions on an iPad for ease of data collection and use. The participants then take time to walk around each school area to answer questions, rate environments, and provide important feedback. The information is then analyzed to better understand how stakeholders perceive the building’s environment and implement changes as needed.

The practice was piloted for the first time at Lincoln Elementary in Spring 2021, with the plan to gather feedback, implement recommended changes, and replicate at other TSD Title I schools the following school year. A challenge to implementing the practice was related to COVID-19, as Lincoln had to be very cautious about gathering people to enter the school building and walk around the hallways and classrooms.

The Environmental Scan survey is a great tool to gather feedback from all stakeholders and perceptions about welcoming, inclusive and supportive school environments. Some advice to anyone who wants to implement this practice is to intentionally select people from different departments and with different backgrounds to ensure feedback that adequately represents the stakeholder groups of the school.