

Food Outreach Champions

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



In the days immediately after Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) closed due to COVID-19, district staff created and coordinated a team of outreach champions to support families who, for a variety of reasons, could not leave their homes during the crisis. This team included many of BVSD's community liaisons and an assortment of teachers, principals, front office staff, and community volunteers.

The project was initially intended to be a one-day event over Spring Break. Staff knew the Emergency Food Distribution was shutting down for 12 days, meaning some families would not be able to provide food to their children. The Equity and Partnerships team collaborated with the BVSD Food Services department and the district foundation, Impact on Education, to offer a day for a designated school representative to pick up food bags and gift cards for families who were unable to leave their homes.

Little did district staff know that one day would turn into an ongoing service to families who fell victim to the many challenging effects caused by COVID-19. Since that day in mid-March, every Tuesday and Thursday, dozens of BVSD staff members hit the road, picking up food, books and supplies, then safely hand-delivered the items to the doorsteps of the district's most vulnerable families.

Due to a generous outpouring of community organizations, BVSD outreach champions are now able to offer even more resources when they visit homes. Outreach champions can now offer even more resources, including bringing books, ensuring families have Internet, providing personal care products, and giving art supplies to students and families.

When summer break commenced, it was uplifting to discover that so many of the delivery champions were interested in continuing to serve over the vacation. BVSD was able to compensate them for their time and reimburse them for their mileage. Staff also added a few volunteers from the community to the summer team to ensure that they were meeting the needs of families from all participating schools throughout this challenging time.

In the end, it is not just the resources that the outreach champions bring to families. It is also the value of seeing a person who cares about them and sharing a face-to-face interaction - from a distance. When they are going to the doorsteps and safely interacting with families, they are an ear to better support teachers and principals and other staff. They are able to garner better insight to help everyone better fill voids.

BVSD's Director of Equity and Partnerships shares: "These porch conversations will sometimes give us a more candid view of what families truly need. There is something different that happens when we let go of the position of power that we inhabit when we ask families to come to us. When we are standing on a family's porch, they feel more comfortable to speak candidly and transparently about what is going well, what they need and what could better help them and their children during these unprecedented times."