

Personalized Engagement

Denver Public Schools

Denver, CO



Denver Public Schools' Community Engagement Strategy and Advocacy (CESA) Team creates culturally relevant, transparent, and authentic engagement strategies through consultation, strategic planning, and advocacy across the district. The approach is community-led and district supported, ensuring that those closest to the issues are closest to the decision-making. The team is committed to:

- Honoring Denver communities through story-telling.
- Listening to understand.
- Creating community-driven processes across the family of schools.
- Creating shared accountability through mutual trust and shared decision-making with partners, families and throughout the district.

Part of this commitment is demonstrated through Personalized Engagement (PE) for schools. CESA began the PE initiative to respond to the increased need for engagement to develop trusting relationships with families. CESA prioritizes Title I schools and other high priority schools to initiate PE since they may potentially face significant changes in upcoming years making PE essential for their efforts moving forward. However, schools can request to collaborate on PE and/or CESA can contact a school if there is an identified need regardless of a school's status.

PE utilizes personal visits between a student's parent or guardian and a CESA staff member. These conversations are focused on building relationships and listening to families/parents and their experience with their school and community. Family and Community Engagement (FACE) staff members are trained to ensure that families are able to access academic partnership and multigenerational resources that are linked to learning and find plausible avenues for engagement at both school and district levels.

Engagement occurs in phases, and each phase is tailored to a school's particular needs that are determined in collaboration with school leaders during the intake process. School leaders and FACE team members agree on what is needed and commitments that each party can make. For example, after initial inquiry with school leaders for Phase I, Phase II could consist of small group engagement led by CESA team members with the objectives to increase parent participation and ensure community voices are heard. CESA compiles a biannual report that provides data updates in the middle of the school year and a final report at the end of the school year with recommendations for school leaders.

One of the challenges and most important components is buy-in from school leaders. This is a collaborative process and it is necessary that school leaders can commit not only to the process, but to the implementation of recommendations to make changes in the way that they engage community. Otherwise, the process may be deemed obsolete. To those wanting to replicate the process, Senior Manager, Eloy Castro, advises: "Understand the community that they are engaging with and have some understanding of best practices. Some communities may prefer to meet as a collective at a civic dinner while others may prefer to engage virtually. It's going to have to be tailored to the group that they are working with."