



# Promising Partnerships Practices

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# 2021

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A collection of initiatives from districts and schools  
about working with families and community partners  
for student learning



State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

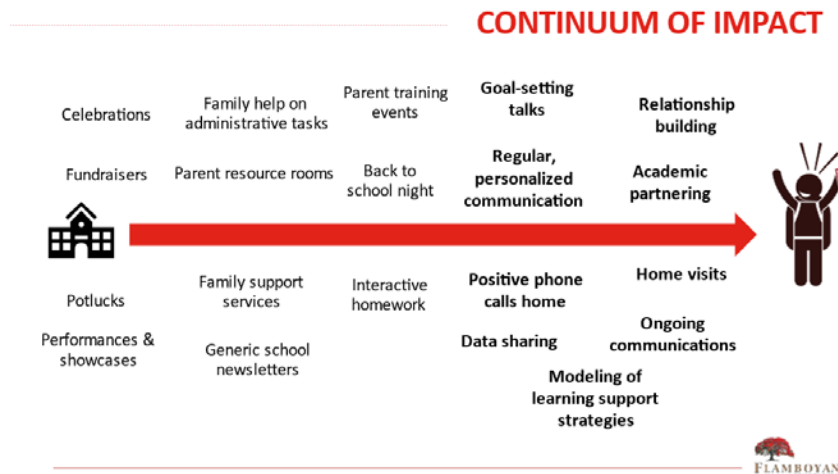
# Introduction



The State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) are pleased to share this seventh annual collection of *Promising Partnership Practices*. The purpose of this publication is for schools, districts, and other educational organizations in Colorado to highlight how they partner with families and the community for student success.

Over 55 years of research indicate that students are more likely to succeed both academically and behaviorally when schools, families, and communities work together. This publication includes over 30 practices categorized by Colorado’s Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP) Framework (CDE, 2020) and the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2008).

Several themes emerged in this year’s compilation of practices. Most practices were in some way either developed or modified because of the Covid-19 pandemic. An overarching theme of equity was also prevalent. Many practices involved focusing on families’ and students’ mental health and healing through the arts. More than any previous year, most practices fall along the “high impact” side of the FSCP continuum.



We look forward to highlighting more practices each year and to improving outcomes for students through family, school, and community partnering.

In Partnership,

Leslie Levine, SACPIE Chair

Dee Leyba, SACPIE Vice Chair

Dr. Darcy Hutchins, CDE Director of Family, School, and Community Partnerships

# Family School and Community Partnerships (FSCP)

## A Preschool through 12th Grade Guide for Colorado School Districts



FAMILY  
SCHOOL AND  
COMMUNITY  
PARTNERSHIPS



### Definition:

Families, early childhood programs, schools, and communities actively partnering to develop, implement, and evaluate effective and equitable practices to improve educational outcomes for children and youth.

The below **4 Essential Elements** will help you guide your way.



### Create an Inclusive Culture

## Create an Inclusive Culture

An inclusive culture honors the lived experience of families in early childhood programs and/or the school community. Self-assess with the following:

- How are your practices inclusive of all families?
- How are you learning about families lived experiences?
- Who is leading and supporting the creation of the welcoming culture?

## Build Trusting Relationships

Trusting relationships enable families and programs/schools to partner about the education outcomes for children and youth. Self-assess with the following:

- What do trusting relationships look like in your program/district/school?
- How are you ensuring effective use of two-way communication with your families to sustain positive relationships?
- How do you leverage relationships with families to achieve your program/district/school goals?



### Build Trusting Relationships



### Design Capacity-Building Opportunities

## Design Capacity Building Opportunities

Capacity building opportunities for staff and families promote shared leadership about educational outcomes for children and youth. Self-assess with the following:

- How do you use the context expertise of families to better your content expertise?
- How are you utilizing the assets of your families in your programs/schools?
- How are you using FSCP as a school improvement strategy?

## Dedicate Necessary Resources

Necessary resources integrate and elevate partnering practices to scale. Self-assess with the following:

- How do you implement evidence-based practices to cultivate and sustain FSCP?
- Where are you now and where will you go?
- How will you continually improve your family partnerships through community-based resources?



### Dedicate Necessary Resources

# Black History Starts Here Celebration

## Rocky Mountain Prep-Creekside

### Denver, CO



Rocky Mountain Prep-Creekside is home to a diverse student body. Annually, the school celebrates the community's rich cultural diversity with families and students through interactive events. Given the heightened health guidelines as a result of COVID-19, ways to engage with families shifted and events transitioned to virtual platforms. For the family leaders on the Parent Educators and Kids (PEAK) Committee, a virtual shift meant new perspectives, and a new approach to foster the sense of community that has always been associated with Creekside's family events. The group coordinated a month-long celebration of Black History to elevate Black voice, traditions, and historical leaders.



For over two months, PEAK families planned and coordinated event logistics and partnered with committee liaisons to share updates with school staff. The families organized a campus-wide bulletin board design competition. Each grade-level was assigned a historical figure to depict and the winner was announced during the "Black History Starts Here" event. PEAK families connected with local Black-owned businesses to sponsor the winning grade with books and ice-cream from their stores. These community figures were also honored during the virtual celebration. Finally, PEAK families created and distributed lesson plans and activities for each grade to support teachers with instruction about Black History Month. In this way, Creekside's community was included in both the creation and celebration of the event.

"Black History Starts Here" was the top-attended event of the year and led to a climate of inclusivity and celebration. More than 128 families, staff, and local community leaders gathered to celebrate local Black leaders and recognize that Black history is here and now; happening in their own community. Each grade shared their understanding of a historical figure by presenting a video. Guest speakers included School Board member, Tay Anderson, and local doctor, Dr. Dana Roper-Cooper. Students and families were eager to share their learning and continue to elevate powerful traditions, figures, and cultures.

Despite the challenges--and technology issues--associated with hosting a virtual event, PEAK families were able to successfully coordinate and implement the campus-wide celebration. Following the celebration, PEAK families debriefed together to evaluate the areas of strength and growth. The group indicated that the robust attendance, increased student awareness, and positive feedback from families, staff, and community members served as indicators of the events' effectiveness.

The committee plans to continue celebrating important heritage months by partnering with students, staff, families, and community members in similar ways. Through such collaboration, shared learning, and diversity of perspectives, PEAK families and other sites can replicate this experience to foster cultural awareness and joy.

# Clay Workshop

## Poudre School District

### Fort Collins, CO



Family Liaisons in Poudre School District (PSD) schools continually work to improve home-school communications for English Language Learners. Pre-pandemic, this included once a month in person meetings for parents to learn about different topics to help them navigate the school system and support their child’s learning. This year, Latinx families were overwhelmed with online learning and the stressors that came along with the pandemic, particularly mental health. The goal of this workshop was to provide a space for families and students to practice reading and listening comprehension. Families and students demonstrated their understanding of each story through clay art activities, which also helped to relax the mind and promote well-being.

Elementary and secondary Family Engagement Specialists partnered with Poudre River Library District’s bilingual community outreach workers to contract with an artist in Guadalajara, Mexico, “Memo Plastilina,” to teach a story/clay workshop. Having an authentic Mexican artist host the workshop was a highlight for many families.

Families received a registration link through School Messenger to attend the event. The day before the workshop, an email was sent to all participants with the link to the virtual class. Registration was closed a week before class, so the team had time to get the supplies to the school sites for students to take home.

During the workshop, students listened to a Spanish reading of the story *La Fortuna de Berta*, written by Lourdez Gutierrez and illustrated by Memo Plastilina. After the story, students used clay to create their own version of Berta the chicken. The students were completely enthralled with the clay and their creations. As Memo was showing the steps with the clay, he talked about Berta and asked them questions about the book. Talking to children about the books they read is one of the best ways to support literacy, auditory and oral development, and sharing cultural and linguistic wealth within the family. This activity encouraged students and families to practice both critical thinking and creativity.

Family Liaisons reported that parents were very happy and satisfied with the clay workshop; they really liked that it was hands on and kept the students engaged; they immediately asked when the next one would be! One of PDS’s family engagement leaders commented that it was amazing to see all the different variations of Bertha the students created. The students also said how much they enjoyed the experience.

The family engagement specialist’s advice to those wanting to implement this program would be give yourself time to purchase the supplies and get them together to send out to families. Another consideration would be to ensure all students have access to a laptop.

# 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.

# Families and Educators Together Teams (FET)

## Boulder Valley School District

### Boulder, CO



The work of Families and Educators Together (FET) teams in Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) is at the very heart of family-school collaboration as the district strives to move from involvement to authentic, trusting, and relationship-centered partnerships. The teams prioritize listening to underrepresented families' voices about their experiences within the school and creating shared goals for strengthening community.

The district currently has FET teams at 14 of their 56 schools. Teams meet monthly and are comprised of at least five parents (who represent the student population), five educators, and a school leader. The teams have seen an increase in family participation at most schools with the shift to virtual meetings during the pandemic. Each team is led by two or three co-chairs who plan each meeting in partnership with BVSD's Director of Family Partnerships. Some schools also include additional staff in the planning process.

In FET gatherings, family members bring forth their voices to discuss with staff how to build a more inviting, equitable, stronger school community for all. Themes discussed have included establishing new school wide communication systems, providing equitable transportation to school events, and including unique family cultures and celebrations within the school's culture.

When initiating a new Family and Educators Team, the district found that it helps to anticipate some challenges and questions. For example:

- How will you intentionally build trust with traditionally underserved populations of families?
- How will you explain the FET concept and how it will help their children at school?
- How you will find staff and/or teachers to help plan and facilitate meetings?

FET meetings reach their potential when the team has a clear understanding of its goals and structure the agenda in ways that prioritize building trust, strengthening relationships, and fostering high levels of participation.

FET is gradually leading participating schools to become more equitable communities and take their school-family partnership efforts to the next level. The impact on how participating family members feel about their child's school is tangible. One FET father shared: "When we come into school, a lot of us Spanish-speakers feel timid when we see the principal. We try to hide. Even though she doesn't speak our language, I now feel comfortable when I see her. I feel like this is my school too."

A mother at another school shared: "It was very difficult for me as a mother to feel trust with the teachers. FET has broken down that barrier for me... As a result of the FET team, many parents have had the chance to bring forth their voices and look for opportunities that before they feared to ask about or pursue."

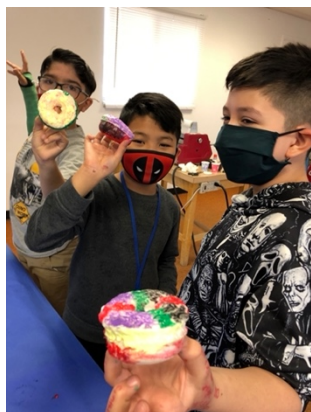
# Healthy Schools Enrichment

## Kullerstrand Elementary School

### Wheat Ridge, CO



Coming into the 20-21 school year, Kullerstrand Elementary School staff wanted to focus on the physical, social, and emotional health of the school community. As a result, Kullerstrand became a part of the Healthy Schools Program through the Jeffco Public School District. By including families in the planning and implementation of the program, staff successfully created an inclusive culture while building trusting relationships, even in a time when families and staff were unable to be together in person.



Lisa Denton (Family Engagement Liaison), Cheryl Clay (Principal), and Sean Kovar (Social Emotional Specialist) worked to form the Healthy Schools Team made up of parents, students, and staff members. Together they planned and implemented the Healthy Schools Enrichment program. Community partners joined and supported their efforts throughout the year.

The yearlong program included many different enrichment opportunities, starting with lessons about Coronavirus precautions. Next, the program focused on mental health by having students make stress balls out of two chemical compounds during science enrichment.

The team offered monthly healthy bingo, a home-based activity getting the whole family involved with nutrition and movement challenges. Family cooking nights so were also a hit! Families would take turns hosting a zoom cooking night where all were invited to join in the social time and learn how to make a nutritious dish.

Johnny Appleseed day focused on the history and nutritional benefits of the apple and ended with planting seeds (which are growing quite nicely now). Corn day covered the importance of corn culturally and how we can use corn to make an environmental impact by learning how to make corn plastic. The school also participated in the district wide Walk-tober challenge which engaged everyone in the physical and mental health benefits of getting out and moving. The program ended the year with the Water Challenge which focused on the importance of drinking water for both your physical wellbeing and for the planet. The PTA even focused their biggest fundraiser around movement. It was truly a collaborative effort!



Families provided feedback on an end-of-year survey and the results will be used to plan and improve for next year. To best replicate this initiative, the Kullerstrand team recommends having a clear focus, using available resources, and collaborating with families and community members to reach your goals. It is also important to plan for the entire year and then be flexible to make changes as needed.



# Liaison Advisory Committee

## Jeffco Public Schools

### Golden, CO



Meaningful stakeholder engagement is essential Jeffco Public Schools' Title I Department. Over the years, Jeffco has improved opportunities for families, school staff, and community partners to provide feedback and guidance on everything from budget to professional development ideas. The established Principal Advisory Committee (TI-PAC) and Teacher Advisory Committee (TI-TAC) are structured to include Articulation area representatives that meet on a regular basis—typically monthly. In 20-21, the district added a Liaison Advisory Committee (TI-LAC) to include Family Engagement Liaisons. TI-LAC was created to:

1. Stand united in the districts efforts to provide access, equity and opportunity so all students can achieve their best,
2. Provide reflection, perspective, feedback, ideas and guidance in sharing recommendations to Title I leadership, and
3. Create processes so work is streamline and efficient.

Launching the TI-LAC has allowed the district to build leadership and ownership within the Family Engagement Liaison (FEL) program. Through this tiered meeting process, liaisons in the Articulation group, which are schools in a geographic area that typically feed into the same high school, are more connected to and have influence in decisions that impact the FEL program, Title I department, and schools. During monthly meetings, they have an opportunity to collaborate across schools, build synergy, and share neighborhood/community resources. Most importantly, each can elevate the voice of the families with whom they work. One idea that percolated this year was an articulation Parent Academy that would bridge elementary and middle school families.

Although various families participated in several district-level learning events this year, ultimately, the goal next year is to have families attend the articulation meetings alongside their FEL, as 'family voice' is best when they can directly participate in the decision making. As for FEL participants, the entire team responded favorably to the TI-LAC/ Articulation meeting structure. In this inception year, TI-LAC representatives were chosen by the Title I Admin team. Next year, a simple 'nomination' process will be used, as the consensus was this leadership opportunity should be offered to all.

For districts that already have a Family Engagement Liaison program, Jeffco recommends considering this type of stakeholder group. The benefits are multifaceted. This shared-leadership model provides an opportunity for communication and feedback to flow. It also serves as an incubator for FELs to hone their facilitation, organization, communication, and leadership skills. In addition to adding families to the Articulation meetings for the upcoming year, the district would also like to build upon the TI-LAC leadership and have them rotate planning and facilitating meetings themselves in collaboration with Title I leaders.

# Lift Every Voice

## Englewood Middle School

### Englewood, CO



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Englewood Middle School (EMS) is participating in the Lift Every Voice (LEV) curriculum as part of a school-wide family and community engagement strategy. With a poverty rate of 66%, EMS is considered a Title I school and serves 330 students, 50% of whom are minorities. Students from low income and minority groups often lack access to and representation in the arts. The main goal of LEV at EMS is to support middle school students in finding their voices and showcasing them through the arts.



The LEV curriculum was developed by the Colorado Symphony's Department of Community Education and adopted by EMS in the spring of 2021. Delivering a message of unity, social justice, and creative self-expression by showcasing diverse backgrounds, students are able to see themselves in the music and begin exploring their own musical identities through the curriculum. This resonated with the principal, Annessa Hart, and the assistant principal, Erin Stovall. Annessa and Erin connected with the Colorado Symphony's Director of Community Education, Jesse Martinez. Together they brainstormed ideas to implement the program at EMS. Staff received professional development to prepare them to implement the curriculum.

In its pilot year, the practice culminated in a unique, socially distanced, and engaging community event where student work was displayed and celebrated. Even with a pandemic looming, the event had a great turnout and was precisely what students, families, and staff needed to bring closure to an unprecedented school year.



To date, EMS staff evaluated the practice anecdotally through student and family engagement. The greatest challenges were in finding safe public ways to celebrate the students amid the pandemic.

EMS's advice to others wanting to replicate the curriculum is to think outside the box when it comes to family and community engagement. A small investment in a practice such as Lift Every Voice will have a lasting impact on the school's relationship with students and their families.

# Newcomer Inclusiveness and Trusting Relationships

## Adams 12 Five Star School District

### Thornton, CO



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Adams 12 Five Star School District staff wanted to ensure inclusivity of families who speak a language other than English or Spanish. Language is a barrier when families speak a language that may not be as common and when there are few to none who speak that same language in the community and schools. Adams 12's Newcomer Youth Advocate took the lead in 20-21 toward helping families feel connected to someone in their school district who may not speak their language, but has a knack for building trusting relationships and breaking communication barriers.

This practice takes a very hands-on approach. It includes completing a Newcomer intake form where families receive information about the school system and the school learns about the family and their educational goals. At the initial intake, the Youth Advocate becomes aware of what resources the family needs and follows-up with a home visit. Multiple language-based resources are used during all interactions with the family, including tele language, Google translate, family members, neighbors, or anyone in the community who can assist to improve communication. The most genuine way of communicating with families that do not speak English or Spanish is by showing that you care, creating a pleasant atmosphere, and demonstrating positive welcoming body language. This practice requires that the advocate and school staff become educated about the families' culture, such as removing shoes prior to entering a families' home and dates/impact of religious holidays.

Both students and families experience benefits from the home visits and improved communication. For example, one student who received a home visit asked the Newcomer Youth Advocate for help with biology. The Newcomer Youth Advocate worked with the biology teacher to explain the student's level of English language comprehension and connected the teacher with the building ELL coordinator so that assignments and tests could be modified. This student was able to understand and demonstrate his knowledge of the subject matter in other ways that do not require heavy English dialect. Similarly, families contact their advocate when they needed help communicating with their electric company, connecting with the DMV and of course, their local schools.

The Newcomer Youth Advocate is a new position in Adams 12 that many believed would cover all district-wide Newcomer support. Currently it only supports secondary schools that do not have a family outreach liaison. The district is in the process of empowering schools to be their own Newcomer advocates, teaching school-based liaisons to be aware of Newcomer in their buildings and how to best understand their needs.

Adams 12's Newcomer Youth Advocate shares the following advice: "Take the time to get to know Newcomer families' situations and listen to their stories. They are a long way from home, sometimes unaccompanied, without parents or guardians and the majority of the time have suffered various forms of trauma. These families are prime examples of resiliency and strength. It is in our best interest as a community to offer them a welcoming environment and help support students in any way, shape or form. The better prepared students are, the more likely they will become positive contributing members of society. Students are part of our communities, our neighbors and future."

# Virtual Art Therapy

## Poudre School District

### Fort Collins, CO



During this past year of the pandemic, Latinx families and students have experienced an increased amount of stress. However, families have also shown an incredible amount of resiliency and ability to learn new things, like participating in virtual family engagement events. In March 2021, Poudre School District collaborated with a Spanish speaking Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) in town to host a virtual art therapy class for the Latinx community. The goal of this workshop was to engage parents and students with the beauty and relaxing elements of art, watercolor painting specifically, and share an activity that adults and children of all ages could enjoy together; stress free and full of individual creativity!

Both elementary and secondary Family Engagement Specialists worked collaboratively to coordinate the event with the art therapist. The therapist provided a list of materials and supplies and the office manager ordered supplies for 50 families. The team of family liaisons helped inform and register families for the event. In addition, they sent the invitation via School Messenger email to families with a link to a Google form for families to sign themselves up. In less than 2 weeks all 50 spots filled up. Bags with supplies were delivered to schools so the students could take them home.

The virtual art therapy class was hosted on Microsoft Teams. Families were sent the link to the meeting via email. All families who registered received a bag with watercolors, brushes, watercolor paper (whole pages and small tiles), a fine point black pen, blank paper, and markers. They were instructed by the therapist how and when to use each item as the project and therapy session progressed and they created their projects.

The therapist explained how drawing and painting use different parts of our brains and helps us connect and process our emotions and stress leading to well-being. She asked each participant to have an intention for the workshop. She explained how art can connect us to positive emotions, past and present, and help calm our busy minds so we can be present and mindful. These are socioemotional skills that adults and students alike can utilize at any time. This workshop helped build positive relationships between parents and their children as well as create community among families in a shared experience.

At the end of the session, families wrote comments in the chat showing appreciation for the class. Families unmuted and shared comments to say that it was a relaxing and calming activity that took them away for the day's stress. They were grateful for the space provided to try something new, something hands-on and different from the norm. They also asked for more workshops like this in the future.

The family engagement specialist's advice to those wanting to implement this program would be give yourself time to purchase the supplies and get them together to send out to families. Another consideration would be to ensure all students have access to a laptop.

# Youth Equity Council

## Boulder Valley School District

### Boulder, CO



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The Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) Youth Equity Council (YEC) formed in February 2021 to expand the conversation around equity. While BVSD has long recognized that to achieve excellence for every student, they must have a steadfast commitment to equity, student voice was largely missing from the conversation. Recognizing the potential of youth when given agency and viewed through an asset-based lens, co-founders, Amy Nelson, BVSD Coordinator of Equity and Community Engagement, Charla Agnoletti, CU Boulder’s Public Achievement (PA) Program Director, and Soraya Latiff, CU Boulder’s PA Assistant Director, launched the council to bring youth voice into the conversation.

Over 300 students applied to be a part of the YEC. Members were selected through an application process, in which they provided their demographics, described an inequity they had experienced within the school system, and their motivation for wanting to join the council. Through this process, 66 students were selected to be members, representing every middle and high school across the district. Students on the council are diverse across many intersecting identities. The selected students formed three equity issue teams: Student Rights, Student Resources, and Students for Anti-Racism.

During the pandemic, students met virtually, bi-monthly. The council began with two leadership training sessions focused on identity, youth organizing, and community-based research. Through continued participation in YEC meetings, students began to develop a sense of belonging and purpose in their K-12 education experience, a sense of their ability to contribute to change, as well as their ability to build youth-adult partnerships for educational equity. Students worked to address equity issues they identified while collaborating with district leadership, the district Equity Council, and community organizations. To date, the YEC presented to the superintendent and his cabinet and the Board of Education, provided feedback on the Boulder Police Master Plan and on BVSD’s School Resource Officer resolution, presented to the larger Equity Council on curricular representation, and supported an elementary class working on an equity project.



The YEC structured both formal and informal evaluations weekly that included Google Forms at the end of each session in addition to verbal and written feedback during each session. This consistent evaluation with participants allowed the facilitators to ensure students were connected to the content, the community, and felt their voices were being heard in the process. Youth shared anecdotally that the ability to provide feedback through the formal evaluation at the end of each session affirmed their agency and leadership to guide the direction and content of the council efforts. Additionally, YEC students were able to gather in person for the first time in June 2021 and were joined by many members of the district leadership team, the Board of Education, and their families. The YEC will continue next school year.

The YEC advises any district wanting to start a Youth Equity Council to ensure they are committed to not only hearing youth voice but, “[...] that people will take students and youth [voice] seriously” (Williams, YEC member). That requires establishing true youth-adult partnerships and leaning into the discomfort that often occurs for adults when youth critique education systems to improve them. Then, let the youth lead the way.

# Building Trust with Families Project

## Eagle County School District

### Eagle, CO



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Eagle County School District (ECSD) has a district-wide focus on equity and the importance of being bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural. Half of ECSD programs, PreK-12, offer 50/50 Dual Language Education. ECSD participates annually in district-wide Professional Development training on Cultural Proficiency and Equity. The goal of the Building Trust with Families Project is to improve trust between IEP teams and families, thus supporting families to play a more engaged role in IEP meetings when establishing goals and services that support student outcomes.

The ECSD Building Trust with Families Project was a collaboration between the following team members: Elizabeth Hoeft, Early Childhood Special Education Teacher, Disability Coordinator and Child Find Team member; Daniela Melgarejo, Child Find Coordinator and Bilingual Speech- Language Pathologist; Rocio Garcia-Aguirre, Early Childhood Family Service Team Coordinator; Jessica Martinez, Director of Multilingual Education; Angelica Espinosa, District Interpreter/Translator; and Monica Villalobos-Russell, District Interpreter/Translator.

One of the most important keys to a child's success is the positive involvement of parents. Many ECSD IEP teams felt that not all families play active roles in the creation and implementation of their children's IEPs due to a lack of trust. To address this concern, the team established the following practices:

- 1) An IEP Parent Video and meeting documents that are shared with families prior to meetings to help them learn about the purpose of IEP meetings, what to expect, and how to prepare.
- 2) An ECSD IEP team member connects with families prior to meetings to help them prepare and identify topics of discussion.
- 3) IEP teams collaborate with interpreters and share student information so they are prepared to support the discussion.
- 4) ECSD staff is trained annually on how to build trust with diverse families, including helping staff to understand the issues and reflect on current practices, as well on how to work with an interpreter.

Preservice training plans were also facilitated to grade level teams to fit the unique needs of each level. Supplemental training materials included an additional video on how to work collaboratively with interpreters.

School districts have departments that often operate separately from each other. The key to the success of this project was to ensure that experts from many different departments worked together to achieve the common goal of building trust to increase the engagement of parents who need an interpreter within the IEP process. A committee with diverse members helps to design a more holistic approach to meeting that goal.

# D6 Paints

## Greeley-Evans School District 6 Family Center Greeley, CO



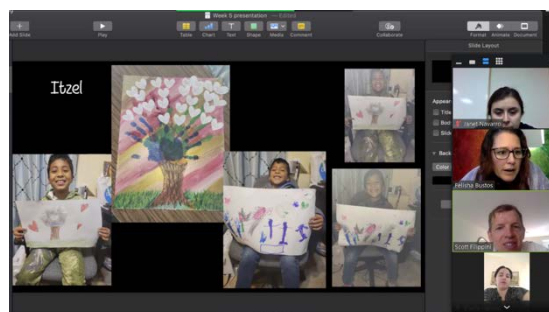
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The goal of D6 Paints was to provide parents with a space to speak about mental health, specifically about the importance of parents taking time for themselves within the context of COVID-19 in which work, chores, and childcare have taken front and center.



The entire D6 Family Center staff was involved in the implementation of this practice, including the Director of Cultural Excellence & Family Engagement, an Art Teacher, the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition, and the Title 1 Specialist. Two Franklin Middle School secretaries also helped provide interpretation of documents and communication to families. Family Center staff personally invited families to the D6 Paints class. Additionally, flyers were shared with parents through the Center’s social media page and through schools’ emails home.

D6 Paints was an art class for families which included two time slots to best fit parent’s schedules—10AM on Wednesdays and 5PM on Thursdays. The art class started at the beginning of the spring semester and lasted for six weeks. The class focused on painting and creating art. Some parents painted a canvas of themselves (self-portraits) and others drew something they identified with or felt represented themselves.



After the six-week course, parents provided feedback to include another course for the whole family. Therefore, a second class was added with a focus around children’s books. The second class included a collaboration with the “Motheread Program” to read a book each week with a different theme. Families would then create art with their children related to the book. Parents reported that creating art about the books with their children helped them feel more involved with their children’s reading.

Some challenges faced during the implementation of the program included getting the materials to each family as well as poor internet connection. Some parents would join via cell phone and could not get good connection or see everyone on the call. The program remedied this by lending laptops to parents from the district.



The D6 Family Center staff’s advice to others wanting to replicate the program would be to make parents feel valued in order to build trust and interest in the event. It is important to build connections through phone calls and conversations and tailor the class to the group.

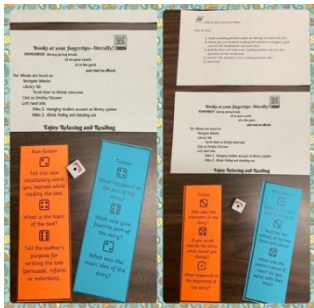
# Family Engagement Projects

## Westgate Elementary School

### Lakewood, CO



The 20-21 school year showed the resilience of Westgate Elementary School’s families, students, and staff. With the back-and-forth of schools closing due to quarantines and students working on Chromebooks, parents missed the interaction of seeing work brought home by their children. In an interview in January 2021, parents stated that they wanted to see the work their students were doing in person and continue supporting that work at home.



Parents trust that at Westgate, their voices are heard. After the January 2021 interviews, when parents stated they missed seeing work, Westgate’s Family Engagement Liaison (FEL) met with administration to discuss the data. Westgate’s FEL collaborated with the Instructional Coach to create month family engagement activities that aligned to class-centered projects.

In February, Westgate distributed the first family engagement project to every student, both in-person and remote learning. The first project focused on STEM and was an observation machine. All materials to make the observation machine were sent home. It was well received by both students and parents.



In March, Westgate focused on Language Arts and sent home bookmark dice games with thick and thin questions for both primary and intermediate levels. Students really enjoyed reading with their families and using the bookmarks as leading questions.



April’s collaboration with grade level teachers focused on Math. Families received Big Question math projects or games. When parents were asked about the projects, many stated they enjoyed learning with their children and asked if there would be something they could do over the summer. As a result, In May Westgate sent home summer packets to help students prevent loss of learning while out of school.

With such a positive response from students and families, Westgate will continue to send home the Family Engagement projects. To have a project like this be successful, schools should talk to parents and ask what they want and work together with not just the parents but school staff as well. Teachers, paras, administrators, and instructional coaches having an input makes such a large undertaking not just successful, but equitable, and fun!



# One Call at a Time

## Centaurus High School

### Lafayette, CO



Centaurus High School, located in Boulder Valley School District, launched a positive phone call initiative during the Covid-19 pandemic. The primary aims of the One Call at a Time project were to deepen student engagement and strengthen ties with families by recognizing students through phone calls made by school and district-level leadership. In the second half of the school year, the high school made more than 200 positive calls.

Positive phone calls are a high-impact, relationships-centered approach to strengthen bonds with families and recognize students in a meaningful and motivating fashion. They are also simple and fast. It takes less than five minutes to make the call and leaves students and families feeling uplifted, appreciated, and seen. Positive phone calls or other positive outreach systems (i.e. postcards, emails, etc.) both fortify school-family partnerships and propel student learning.

The One Call at a Time team consisted of the school principal, school Engagement Specialist, Director of Equity and Family Partnerships, a Director of Student Services, and a district Coordinator of Instructional Practices. The team developed two overview documents to inform and engage staff. Two district leaders and the principal made the majority of the calls. School based staff identified students who could benefit from a positive call by entering their names and reason for the call on a staff wide spreadsheet. Calls conveyed either the personalized messages written by the staff member or used a script when a staff member opted not to write an individualized message. All call notes and relevant contact information were documented on the spreadsheet. If any specific time-sensitive information was shared during the call, the team member contacted the principal and school counselor. To support greater two-way communication, families were also encouraged to contact the staff for any support. Any student could be nominated for a positive call home, but the overarching focus was on students who had recently made some type of improvement. Staff were encouraged to think of students who were improving their attendance, increasing their engagement, more consistently completing assignments, or students that were better advocating for themselves.

Next year, the school hopes to have both teachers and school leaders make phone calls to utilize a two-pronged approach that would make the impactful practice better woven into the culture of the school. The team's advice to others wanting to replicate the program would be to expect teachers or staff to create a personalized message for all students listed on the spreadsheet so calls can be completed more quickly and efficiently. One effective strategy to garner greater participation could be for school leaders to carve out time at meetings for staff to write their messages and/or make calls. Having a handful of "early adopters" on staff serving as enthusiastic ambassadors for the initiative can also help increase participation. Additionally, while leaving voicemails for families is still powerful, to reach them directly it is best to call during non-work hours.

The short calls made a notable impact. One mother said, "I really appreciate the call. I needed this today. My son is going to be glowing." After receiving a voice message, a father reached back out and shared, "Thanks for reaching out today. That's awesome! We are super happy to hear it and very proud. Especially since he never shares." Another father perhaps captured the essence of the benefits best when he said, "Any good news about a teenager is always welcome!"

# Relationship Centered & Culturally Responsive Home Visits

## Boulder Valley School District

### Boulder, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

The Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) launched their first parent-teacher home visit cohort in 2018, with 60 K-12 teachers, counselors, and school administrators. Since then, at least 10 additional trainings have been offered, with more than 500 educators participating in relationship-centered and culturally responsive home visits. This school year BVSD district staff trained and supported another 160 educators in conducting virtual or in-person visits. Home visits are a high-impact family partnering initiative that consistently strengthens relationships and enhances trust and communication between staff, students, and families.

To ensure that there was an effective and inspired implementation of this well-known strategy, the BVSD Director of Family Partnerships spent months researching home visit best practices and interviewing knowledgeable national leaders so that the training could be internally led, more financially sustainable, and catalyze high levels of interest in this new practice. During the past school year, the district more deeply embedded home visits into the culture of their school district by strategically partnering with specific cohorts and schools. For instance, they collaborated with the leaders of the early childhood department and trained every preschool and kindergarten teacher in the week before school started. They had time built into that same week to conduct many of their virtual home visits. They also trained the entire staff at one high school early in the school year and offered another training for all interested educators across the district at the end of the year. Guiding educators on how to make virtual home visits was a necessary and meaningful enhancement as it made this process more accessible for many of their educators and families.

Prior to engaging in home visits, all educators attend a two-and-a-half hour training that had three major elements: 1) the “why” behind home visits to ensure that they are enthusiastic and wholeheartedly understand the power of the practice; 2) a detailed look at the core elements of an effective home visit so that all participants feel well prepared and confident; 3) approximately an hour spent examining implicit bias and key elements of cultural responsiveness so that the educators are more thoughtful and effective in their visits and utilize each visit as an opportunity to develop their capacity as culturally responsive educators. All participants were encouraged to engage in at least five home visits per year, ideally at the beginning of the school year. At the end of each training, participants were asked to provide detailed feedback so that each iteration of the training is more engaging and impactful than the one before. Each educator also completed a reflection form that helped them cull more meaning and learning from each visit. Families are also asked for their feedback on the program.

The district’s advice to others wanting to replicate the home visit program is to: 1) Compensate participants for the professional development time if the best option is to hold the training outside of contract hours; 2) Get several school leaders on board to help the practice spread more quickly 3) Either invest the time to develop your own training or hire someone locally 4) Provide participants with ample resources to support their success (i.e. letter templates to be sent in advance of phone calls, tips, articles, etc.); 5) Start building momentum by identifying the most enthusiastic educators or schools. It can be difficult to find the time for participants to be trained and engage the entire staff at a given school.

# SMS Surveys and Individual Outreach

## KIPP Colorado Schools-Northeast

Denver, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education



During the 20-21 school year, KIPP Colorado Schools-Northeast found new opportunities to engage families in their students' education from home. Two specific ways to do this were text surveys and individual phone calls and cards. The goal of the surveys is to make feedback accessible to every families. Even if a smartphone is not available, most families can receive short text service messages (SMS) on their mobile phones. KIPP

administrators used Possip to regularly communicate with families. The SMS simply asks "Are you happy with (Name of School)? Reply: Yes, Mostly, or No". If a parent responds they get a follow up SMS, "What praise, ideas, or questions do you have at this time?" This information is relayed back to the school for review. This first question is great to just get a pulse check on how families are feeling overall.

The goal of individual outreach is to ensure that families feel connected and valued at their children's school and to meet parent leaders. Regional engagement coordinators (REC) and family leaders are involved in the individual outreach to families. This process starts with schools providing the REC twenty randomly selected families. The REC then works with the family leaders to determine how many parents/guardians they want to call and write to. Phone calls can last anywhere from five minutes to fifteen minutes. Pre and post conversation notes take an additional five to ten minutes per call. The average number of parents/guardians given to each family leader to call is seven. Family representatives have a phone call guideline to help them document and be consistent in their phone calls. Principals assign time during regular meetings to review the Possip results with their leadership staff. From these meetings different teams work on addressing any concerns or receive praise from the comments of their families.

Individual phone calls are collected using a Google form. These phone calls help create a one-to-one connect with families and their family representatives. Most phone calls resulted in open conversation and a deeper insight to any possible resources the family might need. Communication with families is a topic that both principals and family leaders wanted to explore.

Individual phone calls are reviewed with family leaders and principals during the family council and principal quarterly meeting. However, if during a phone call a timely item is shared, then an email is sent to the principal for immediate action. Despite the guideline document, time to practice with the REC and only seven phone calls per parent representative, not every phone call was made. Most parent leaders report 'not having the time to make the phone call.' When given the option, most prefer to write a card to their list of parents/guardians. The downside of this is the loss of feedback.

SMS surveys are a simple and quick way to engage families. Make sure to call attention to this tool during registration, family meetings and parent teacher conferences. Coordinate the delivery of the survey during a school event, and then announce it for families to respond in the moment.

It can be hard to carve out additional time to make one-to-one phone calls or cards to families. It is such a powerful tool to making families feel special and should be used by family leaders and staff. Schedule fifteen to twenty minutes during monthly family meetings and staff meetings to demonstrate a call and then have everyone in the room complete at least two to three calls or cards to families. Provide them the names, contact info, cell phones or cards.

Essential Element 2—Building Trusting Relationships  
Standard 2—Communicating Effectively

Mission Viejo Elementary School adopted the All Pro Dad program to give fathers the opportunity to be more involved in their children’s education. Mission Viejo staff wanted to implement a research-based family, school, and community partnership (FSCP) initiative and All Pro Dad fit the bill; research shows a father’s presence in a child’s life results in a positive outlook at school.

The program was led by 4th grade teacher, Mr. Charles Kastens, and the principal, Mr. Andre Pearson. Together they worked with a curriculum provided by All Pro Dad. The curriculum included themes of Gratitude, Empathy, and Purpose. The curriculum also included a Dad/Kid Questionnaire that encouraged the parents and children to interact with one another. Mission Viejo staff members and their children were also encouraged to attend the program to community collaboration.



**Dad & Kid Questions**

- **Dad to Kid:** What is something you are grateful for?
- **Dad to Kid:** If you had one day left to live, how would you live it?
- **Kid to Dad:** What is something you are grateful for?
- **Kid to Dad:** What do you think the benefits are of having gratitude?



Participants would meet on the last Thursday of each month over zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Information about the meetings were sent home in the school’s weekly letter to parents and Mr. Kastens also sent out personal emails. The program included a raffle after each meeting to encourage both attendance and activities families could do together at home. Raffle baskets included game and sports themes. The program was evaluated utilizing an end of the year survey. Approximately 80% of participants responded, and 100% wished to have the program resume next year.

COVID-19 posed a challenge for Mission Viejo staff to initiate All Pro Dad; communication was difficult and in-person engagement wasn’t possible. Mr. Kasten’s advice to others wanting to replicate the program would be to advertise and get the word out as much as possible so the program can have a wide variety of participants.



# Collaboration with South Metro Fire Rescue

## Cherry Creek Innovation Campus

### Centennial, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

The Cherry Creek Innovation Campus (CCIC) was built around the vision of “Innovation through Collaboration” with the goal of revolutionizing the student experience in college and career preparedness. Through collaboration with the community and local industry partners, students are afforded the opportunity to reach their highest potential while taking risks, persevering, reflecting, exploring and finding the place where their passions can intersect with their skills sets and their education.

The collaboration was first pitched by members of South Metro Fire Rescue’s (SMFR) EMT Training Team. The “design challenge” was then presented to a small group of students from the CCIC Product Design II class, including Mason Maynell, Joshua Moore, Gabriel Rosales, and Jacob Sathoff. Mike Degitis, Cherry Creek Innovation Campus project coordinator, managed the initiative. In fall of 2020, Paul Foulk, EMS Training Supervisor for South Metro, tasked the students to help conduct better training for performing field based cricothyrotomies, a means of establishing an airway for patients in an emergency. CCIC students were able to 3D print a half dozen true-to-scale tracheas for SMFR to utilize in their trainings.

Due to the success of the prior projects in collaboration with the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus, Paul Foulk decided to bring one more idea to the students in the STEAM pathway. Students have been tasked with creating another EMT training unit, this one utilized in training for intraosseous operations. This year, CCIC students have truly embodied the CCIC belief statements more than ever before. In both the Infrastructure Engineering and STEAM pathways, students have collaborated with South Metro Fire Rescue on multiple projects, each of which challenged students to innovate, iterate, take risks, persevere, and explore the intersection of passion, skill and education.

Throughout the process, SMFR’s training team has been a resource for providing feedback on prototypes and product creation. This project so far has brought on many challenges, the main being a lack of scientific and anatomical understanding about the locations of the body which the students are attempting to replicate. Students have conducted extensive research on bone size, density, skin, and muscle tissue thickness in order to best replicate a real-world patient. Additionally, students are working in a world they haven’t been introduced to before, true product creation. Previously, students have been producing projects for themselves, family members, and friends. This product is something that is instead being analyzed and critiqued by the client themselves and therefore the end user’s voice has become louder than students experienced before.

The first words of advice are create, iterate, and create some more; there is and will always be room for improvement. In addition, student design teams could talk all day about what they could make, but it isn’t until the first prototype is created that you can begin perfecting a product. Having a model to hold in your hands, use for demonstration, inspect, draw on, and discuss is the fuel to development. After creating the first model, the conversation really got rolling on how to improve the product for marketability.

In Denver Public Schools (DPS), the office of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) fosters a school community that is educated, engaged, and empowered to share the responsibility in creating thriving schools where Every Child Succeeds. As COVID-19 emerged, the district wanted to provide their communities with additional support due to the difficult time many families were experiencing. Families were trying their hardest to support their children in this new educational world. When the 2020-21 school year started the district was unable to meet with parents in person, which allowed for a new parent engagement platform to emerge. In late September, the district announced to Title I families a new resource that was created to support them with technology questions, resources, live parent trainings, bilingual high school and college podcasts, and subject-based videos to support students with math, science, and literature. The purpose of the FACE University webpage was intended to be a “hub” for families where they would be able to find important information, trainings, and resources instead of going through many different websites.

An important and critical piece of the FACE University was the Family Leadership Institute (FLI). The Family Leadership Institute has been an in-person venue for DPS families across the district to enhance their leadership skills to support their children’s educational success. The purpose of the FLI was for participants to hone their leadership skills and abilities creating networks to drive positive change at their home, school, and in their communities by gaining a clear vision, values, communication, and organizing throughout their learning experiences. Due to COVID-19, DPS hosted four virtual events on different topics such as Trauma Informed Practices, Communication, Family Engagement Practices, and Behavioral Supports for families. All live sessions had interpretation available in the languages that families registered with and were recorded for families who were not able to attend. The team also did a second virtual version of the FLI in the second semester with a focus on Health and Wellness and Strategies for Behavior, Advocacy and Partnership.

This pivot to live virtual trainings allowed for a larger and more diverse turn out of parents and families in comparison to the in-person events. Challenges in the beginning included getting used to the technology, receiving zoom invitations, emails, etc., which required technology supports and scaffolding for families. Now, families join the meetings with ease and know how to access interpretation, mute their microphones, and ask questions through the chat. Through this pandemic, families have really shown their passion and leadership by joining these different parent engagement opportunities even if it meant getting out of their comfort zones. The FACE University website also has podcasts for high school and college students. These podcasts are bilingual programs that provide necessary information to help families navigate the college process. A panel of experts spoke about various topics including paying for college, choosing a college, myths about the college experience and many other topics they wish they knew when planning for their next steps after high school. There are also short K-8 videos on how to support students with math, science, and literacy. These videos are posted every quarter explaining what children should be learning and how to creatively support students at home.

The FACE University is still growing. There are still many other topics, resources, and information that could be shared but the program this past year has been a success. The district will continue to work on partnership opportunities to make the webpage as successful and as parent friendly as possible with the help of families and community feedback. The district’s goal is to make sure that every person who goes to the FACE University webpage is able to find what they are looking for as well as accessible for everyone.

Essential Element 3—Design Capacity-Building Opportunities  
Standard 2—Communicating Effectively

# Family Centered Meetings Professional Development

## Adams County School District 14

### Commerce City, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Adams 14 school district serves 6,951 students. Over half of the student population are multilingual learners, with Spanish being their home language. During the 20-21 school year, a transdisciplinary team of professionals, serving in a variety of roles in the Adams 14 School District, participated in a year-long Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP) professional development (PD) program to improve relationships and supports for parents and their children. The PD included coursework, coaching with experts, team goal setting and action planning on improving assessment, preschool services, and supports for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The team shared the learning from this professional development program with Adams 14 staff by creating an asynchronous professional development opportunity on Family Centered Meeting Practices. There were three learning objectives for the PD: 1) to help participants gain an understanding of why family-centered and culturally sustaining meeting practices are important; 2) to reflect on their own meeting practices; and 3) to review strategies they can use to make their meetings more family-centered and culturally sustaining.

The asynchronous PD was offered as a choice option during a district-wide professional development day. Thirty-nine staff members chose to participate. Participants served in a variety of roles in preschool, elementary, high school, and district-level settings. The team chose to utilize an asynchronous format using Pear Deck because they wanted the session to be interactive and self-paced. This format allowed for the presentation to be available on the district learning website for use by staff members at any time.

The presentation content focused on defining and describing family-centered meetings and why they are important. The presenters described culturally sustaining meeting practices including working with interpreters and cultural mediators, family-centered strategies, and strategies to manage conflict. The team also highlighted family-centered evaluation practices for practitioners.

The PD team received positive feedback about the learning opportunity, not only the format and content, but also more importantly the changes in practices that participants wanted to make as a result of their learning. Participants were asked to share what strategies they planned to use to make their meetings more family centered. Examples of responses include: “Involving the family in all areas of assessment,” “Let families talk more,” “Use sentence stems to diminish conflict,” and “Ask families what their students do at home, and how they interact as a family.” Over 90% of the respondents felt that the session was useful and practical, and that the session advanced the development of their knowledge. Every respondent said that the activities increased their capacity to improve their practice.

One challenge the team encountered when implementing an asynchronous professional development was that it is difficult to create opportunities to collaborate on shared activities. In the future the team would like to provide follow-up synchronous discussions continued staff collaboration.

Adams 14 plans to use this work as a foundation for practice expectations in the early childhood program for home visiting practices Staff also hope that this PD will be replicated across the district to allow all interactions with families to be family-centered and culturally sustaining.

Essential Element 3—Design Capacity-Building Opportunities

Standard 3—Support Student Success

# Parent Engagement Activities during Covid-19

## Elkhart Elementary School, an IB World School

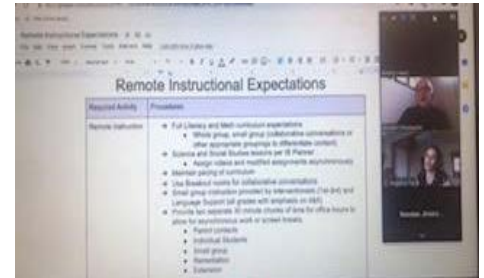
### Aurora, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Since the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, Elkhart Elementary School's parent engagement activities have experienced frequent modifications under the COVID-19 Safety and Health regulations. Elkhart staff remained flexible and adapted as modifications arose and students/families' needs changed.

Elkhart Elementary started with Google/Zoom Video meetings as the main way of connecting with parents about expectations for remote instruction as well as how best to support students' success in the challenging remote learning environment.



Then, Elkhart's Principal and school staff began a series of parent engagement activities to assist Elkhart parents' on how to support their children academically in reading, writing, and math under the special circumstances of the 2020-2021 school year.

In addition, parents with students in Remote Cohorts A and B started to share unanimous concern: their children were exhibiting mood changes and increased anxiety at home. As a response, Elkhart Elementary School teachers and staff created parent engagement activities focused on students' health and wellness. Academic activities included sensorial supplies such as modeling playdough and manipulatives.



All of the above-mentioned activities, as well as other events developed and implemented during the year, helped students and families to challenges in the different learning settings for the 2020-2021 school year.



Essential Element 3—Design Capacity-Building Opportunities  
Standard 3—Supporting Student Success



# Parent Network Groups

## Boulder Valley School District

### Boulder, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education



Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) conducts Parent Network Groups to provide support, resources, and information for families with students with special needs. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, these networking meetings included a monthly 'homework' assignment consisting of an individual research-based action plan that could be used to increase independent living skills, plan next steps, and help

the student work on a specific skill. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the 'homework' assignments were put on hold as many parents were struggling with at-home learning and needed resources and supports focused on the need at-hand.

Before the pandemic, the Parent Network Group held a monthly two-hour, in-person meeting from 11am to 1pm at the BVSD Education Center. During the 2020-2021 school year, meetings were held online via Google meets, with two meetings per month due to increased parent needs. The groups were held from 5:30pm to 7pm. The network consisted of two groups that were divided by level of support and needs. One group was for parents of students who received support at the resource level and the second group was for parents of students who received services through an Intensive Learning Center. Groups were open to all parents who have children ages 3-21 years old. Each group had an email list and were sent reminders, links, and resources about a week before the monthly meeting.

A recent survey of participants indicated a strong desire to return to day-time meetings, but parents did enjoy the on-line format with the possibility of in-person meetings at the end of each semester. Parents reported that not having to drive, take the time to get there and back, or coordinate childcare, made the meetings much more accessible. They reported missing seeing each other in person, but the online format allowed for new parents to smoothly join throughout the year.

Future parenting network groups requested by parents include a group for Spanish speakers and one for parents who have children struggling with mental health needs, particularly anxiety. The impact of the Parent Network Groups is overwhelming positive. One parent shared, "I've found them incredibly helpful. I've learned so much about how to navigate the system. Hearing other parent's stories is so valuable."

Another parent shared, "I appreciate the support and resources to help navigate school with a child with special needs. The groups are amazing and so helpful in terms of community, resources, and learning about policies and practices."

# Read Across Foothills Month

## Foothills Elementary School

### Lakewood, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

In the spirit of celebrating Read Across America Day, Foothills Elementary School designated March 2021 as Read Across Foothills Month (RAFM), an initiative that included many fun ways to engage families to read at home throughout the month.

Foothills' Family Engagement Committee, staff and families committed to participating in Read Across Foothills Month during the Monday Zoom Kickoff Meeting on Monday, March 1st. The team shared a month-long calendar of fun and interactive activities for families to deepen their love of reading. Daily reading activities included an All-School Poetry Contest, a Young Readers Book Club, Drop Everything and Read Day, Hats Off to Reading Day, Reaching Out and Read. Families both in-person and remote participated in the Drop Everything and Read Day activities where everyone dropped everything and read at the designated time for 20 minutes. Many other families participated in Call a Story (story hotline to hear an updated story every single day read by a community member), Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, Reading Recipes at Home, and Swap a Book with a Friend.

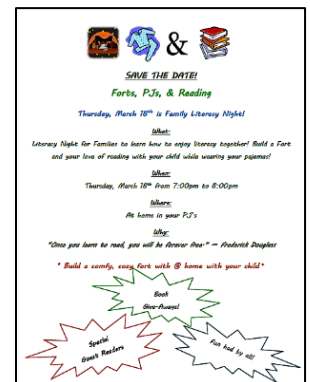
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Read Across Foothills Kickoff Meeting	Book Share Day	Book Share Day	Book Share Day	Book Share Day
Young Readers Book Club	Libraries Open House	Read a Book, Share a Story	Read a Book, Share a Story	Read a Book, Share a Story
Drop Everything and Read	Drop Everything and Read	Drop Everything and Read	Drop Everything and Read	Drop Everything and Read
Call a Story	Call a Story	Call a Story	Call a Story	Call a Story
Guess Who's Coming to Dinner	Guess Who's Coming to Dinner	Guess Who's Coming to Dinner	Guess Who's Coming to Dinner	Guess Who's Coming to Dinner
Reading Recipes at Home	Reading Recipes at Home	Reading Recipes at Home	Reading Recipes at Home	Reading Recipes at Home
Swap a Book with a Friend	Swap a Book with a Friend	Swap a Book with a Friend	Swap a Book with a Friend	Swap a Book with a Friend



The team also hosted a Virtual Literacy Night called Forts PJs and Reading where families built their own reading forts at home and joined the many guest readers on Zoom. The team hosted many wonderful guests including Anne Trujillo from Denver 7 News, Miles the Denver Bronco Mascot, a Children's Author who read one of his cherished books, a former Denver Nuggets player who read one of his favorite childhood books, and Jeffco School Board President Susan Harmon who read alongside her daughter. During Literacy Night, poetry contest winners were honored with prizes, including Barnes & Noble Gift Cards, provided by Foothills' PTA.

Over 250 books were distributed throughout the month to enhance students home libraries. Families were also provided with quick links where they could gain access to different reading programs and reading websites, including the Jefferson County Public Library website. Students who opened a library account and made a video with their new Library Card also won fun reading prizes.

Activities on the calendar were designed with inclusivity in mind so that every family had the opportunity and resources to participate. The Read Across Foothills calendar was an equitable and easy way to gain access to fun reading opportunities.



# Activity Boxes for Migrant Families

Weld Re-8 School District

Fort Lupton, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education



Weld Re-8 school district believes that parents are their children's first teachers. Parents empower their children to learn and grow, and this is a reason why the district purchased activity boxes to help families supporting their children's learning outside of school. The English and Language Development (ELD) Director purchased the activity boxes specifically for migrant families. The boxes

included activities, such as board games, art supplies, flash cards, letter tiles, and much more.

Weld Re-8 distributed the boxes in fall 2020 and again for summer 2021. This initiative gave parents an opportunity to use the tools in the box to strengthen their relationships with their children and practice reading, speaking, writing, and listening, all while having fun.

Weld Re-8 school district, in collaboration with the Centennial BOCES (CBOCES), met together to create a plan around how to distribute the boxes. The District Family & Community specialist and CBOCES representative made phone calls and personally delivered the boxes to their homes, explaining to families what activities were in the boxes. Personalized phone calls home is considered a high impact family partnering strategy that leads to positive student outcomes.

For the summer 2021 distribution, the district offered an in-person pick up date. For those families who were not able to make the pick-up, team members delivered the activity boxes to their homes. Each box included a letter with ideas on what they could do as a family with the activities.

Advice for colleagues wanting to replicate the program would be to designate individuals in the district who will work with migrant liaisons to help distribute boxes to families, preferably staff who are bilingual. It is also important to take time to personally call families rather than simply send home fliers and make robocalls.

# Collaborating with Department of Transportation

## Boulder Valley School District

### Boulder, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Transportation routes and schedules present ongoing challenges both to school districts and to Colorado communities in general. Currently, some of the challenges that the Transportation Department faces are: budget, driver shortage, decreased ridership due to COVID, and inability to service all communities. While unpopular and underrecognized, transportation is a serious dilemma many families grapple with everyday. Forward thinking leadership and creativity have brought a variety of voices to the table to rethink and to brainstorm solutions to the issues mentioned above. As a result, Boulder Valley School District's (BVSD) transportation team has begun collaborating with the city's Regional Transportation District (RTD) team to explore creating a cohesive approach to transportation services throughout the county. The overall goal is to understand the needs of all community members and to better meet those needs, while working within the limitations of the transportation budget and district guidelines.

Shared concern for students and families sparked a deep conversation on how to best serve people who rely solely on school and public transportation to get to work and to school. The BVSD Equity and Partnerships team was able to offer insight on family needs and challenges to the transportation team. This partnership opened avenues of discussion and cast a bright light on the disparities apparent in the current transportation system. Eventually, a greater team was formed to include the voices of a wide variety of community members who shared their personal experiences around transportation and the role it played in their lives. These stakeholders were also invited to ask questions and to offer suggestions on how transportation might be modified and improved to meet the needs of the whole population.

This is a long-term project and one that is in progress. In order to include a focus on student outcomes, a close look at student and family needs must be considered. Questions to be considered include but are not limited to: Can students afford a bus pass? If not, are there reduced price passes available for FR/L approved families? Do the school district and the RTD teams work together to complement each other's schedules and services and to collaborate on how to meet the needs of the community? Is attention being paid to high school schedules? Are students able to stay after school for sports, clubs, or extracurricular activities and still have access to transportation to arrive back home afterwards? Do bus routes service all neighborhoods? What are families saying about the location of bus stops and the efficiency of routes they take to arrive at work?

Although on going, success can be measured by the conversations and considerations that are now taking place. Many transportation directors may not be aware of the needs and/or challenges students confront. It is utterly important for them to hear the voices and to learn the experiences of students and families. Otherwise, it is impossible to know how to improve the system, to become more equitable, and to better serve the community.

The BVSD team encourages other districts to take the time to learn from families about their experiences with transportation. Speak with the students. Ask questions about how the current system and schedule works for them and how it might be improved. Gather information, then build a working/collaborative relationship with your district's department of transportation. The importance of starting a meaningful conversation about an issue of equity can never be overstated. Transportation matters can truly make a difference in people's lives. Aside from addressing a disparity, it also builds a bridge within your school district and the community itself. This is a long-term project that is worth every minute it may take to shine that light on an integral part of the system that may have room for improvement.

# Community Resource Rooms

## Adams 12 Five Star Schools

### Thornton, CO



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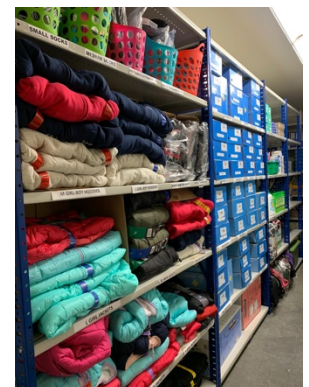
Adams 12 Five Star Schools is the sixth largest school district in Colorado, serving students across five municipalities and two counties. Approximately 45% of students receive free or reduced meals and 4% of the overall student population is identified as “highly mobile.” The recent pandemic worsened already persistent challenges of poverty and housing insecurity for Adams 12 families, and in the 20-21 school year, referrals to the Student and Family Outreach Program (SFOP) increased over 500%.



The Five Star Education Foundation received a \$175,000 grant from Adams County to install resource rooms in 27 schools. A team of district staff, including the Federal Programs Coordinator, the SFOP team, and the Parent Engagement Coordinator, worked with the administrative teams, social-emotional learning specialists, and community liaison at each school to quickly identify space, personnel, and the most needed resources (many schools surveyed their communities to identify this information). The team purchased and installed shelving, organized inventory, and developed communication and distribution plans. Additional grant funding obtained once again by the Foundation enabled schools to continue making food purchases. The local non-profit Food for Hope supported several of the resource rooms as well.

Each school’s resource room is completely unique to the needs of their community, but in general, the rooms are stocked with shelf-stable food, hygiene items, diapers, socks, underwear, cleaning supplies, school supplies, and winter wear. Some schools also added shoes, linens, water bottles, air mattresses, and earbuds. Immediately following the winter break, SFOP saw a dramatic decrease in referrals for basic needs, allowing the SFOP team to focus on acute referrals for health insurance, access to medical and dental care, and housing, rental, and utility assistance. School teams and resource room managers reported an increase in positive school climate and culture as well as positive interactions with families.

Challenges to the program have included the increased workload for resource room managers), problem solving with families who have become overly reliant on the room, marketing to communities that are reluctant to use the room, and finding funds to continue stocking non-food items. Starting the resource rooms in a short window and at such a large scale also created a lot of pressure. The team’s advice to others wanting to replicate the rooms would be to take more time to look at existing models for school resource rooms and speak with others about the lessons they have learned.



# Hotspot Distribution

## Weld Re-8 School District

### Fort Lupton, CO



The Covid-19 pandemic changed the landscape of the 20-21 school year, particularly when it came to how teachers delivered instruction. Remote instruction meant that students needed to have access to the internet to be able to log into their classes. Unfortunately, many internet service providers around Fort Lupton do not offer service, which meant many of the district's

students, with multiple students in one household, had to share one phone hotspot. So many people on one connection made it difficult to have fast enough data to log in or do their homework. Weld Re-8 families found themselves scrambling to find adequate internet access.

In order to support families' needs, Weld Re-8 school district decided to purchase around 200 hotspots from Verizon to distribute to families who were in need. The district made calls, sent emails, and shared on social media to contact the schools if they needed hotspots. Each school provided pickup dates for families to receive their hotspots. For families that were unable to make the pickup date, the District Family & Community specialist personally delivered the devices.

The District Technology Coach and District Family & Community Specialist made home visits to families that needed support in connecting the hotspot and pairing it to the student's Chromebook. They walked families and students through how to turn on the hotspot and how to connect to it on the Chromebook. If families expressed that they did not know how to access the students google classroom, they also taught them how to log into their classes, turn in homework, and how to turn on/off their camera and microphone. From these conversations, the district also decided to offer families virtual training on Google Classroom and technology support explaining these steps.

Providing hotspots to students in need changed students' outcomes. Some students were not logging in to their classes before being offered a hotspot and began to log in after. Providing internet access resulted in a sense of belonging for students as they were able to login and see their teacher and classmates. Advice for colleagues wanting to replicate this would be to take time for outreach and personalized communication. For Lupton's Family & Community Specialist shares: "When families notice you care about them and you are taking time out of your day to show them, they will appreciate your district even more, because you show you care about their students."

# Pandemic-EBT Card Open House

## Weld Re-8 School District

### Fort Lupton, CO



The COVID-19 pandemic impacted student's education, employment, and health. Weld Re-8 school district understood that students and families were struggling with online learning, especially with getting access to the internet, but the district also understood that there were other struggles families were going through. When having conversations with families, the district learned that many families were losing their jobs and therefore struggling to put food on their tables.

Many families reached out to their schools to ask if they knew of any resources in the community that would help with food. This made the district realize families needed additional resources beyond school. As a result, the district shared information regarding the Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program and offered families support with the application process.

In collaboration with Centennial BOCES (CBOCES) and Weld Re-8's District Family & Community Specialist, parents were invited to attend a Pandemic EBT Open House. During the event, families received help to apply for the P-EBT card to help with the purchase of food. The district offered two dates for the Open House to provide flexibility for families, one day in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Following social distance guides, parents were asked to schedule an appointment before they came to the district to get help applying for the card. In total, 49 families attended the Open House to receive help with the application process. Weld Re-8 staff offered another Open House in May 2021 for the second round of P-EBT cards. This practice created a quality experience for all families, students, and staff.

After the two events, the district received calls from families needing help to apply, not only from the Weld Re-8 district but from other districts as well. Many families expressed gratitude for sharing the information and taking the time to help them apply. Families from other districts were also grateful because the District Family & Community specialist did not turn them away because they were from another district.

Advice for colleagues wanting to replicate this program would be to learn about the program before information is shared with families and community partners. Families had many questions, so the district/CBOCES team had to make sure they were prepared to answer all questions. It is also important to share resources using different methods including calls, social media, folders sent home, and email.

# A Scholarship for Highly Mobile Students

## Greeley-Evans District 6

### Greeley, CO



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Born through a partnership between Greeley-Evans District 6 and the Weld Community Foundation, a scholarship—the Bill Winde Fund—was initiated to provide educational supports to students in need. The team at Weld Community Foundation approached the Greeley-Evans District 6 Family Center with a desire to award funds to students. Based on research showing that high mobility is a correlate with poor academic performance, the District 6 team identified highly mobile students as a potential pool for scholarship candidates, including McKinney-Vento identified and migrant students who presented the greatest need.

District 6 began the process by meeting in person with the team at the Weld Community Foundation, establishing goals, hearing donors communicate their vision for the project, and building a relationship between the two organizations and point persons who would coordinate



the logistics of the award. Throughout the school year, a student liaison with District 6 was tasked with identifying candidates for each grade level (7th, 8th, 10th, and 11th). Students asked to apply were highly mobile, had high GPAs, no serious behavior infractions, and good attendance. Candidates completed an application including an essay on how such a scholarship would help them. Finalists were interviewed by a panel of foundation and outside members and students were chosen based on their written applications and interview answers. The liaison assisted the students in making purchases with funds. Winners were allowed to make purchases which would support their education, including clothing, school supplies, technology, musical instruments, and similar items.

An unexpected result of this endeavor was the number of strong relationships built with families. The liaison accompanied families to make purchases at local stores and in the process learned more about their hopes and dreams. Several families allowed the liaison to make home visits in which great connections were made regarding the students' education; families shared their history which helped the liaison to get an intimate look into each family's backgrounds.

The scholarship was designed to be renewed for each student annually until graduation from a District 6 school, as long as they maintain good grades and behavior, to create stability in education for the students. The program's hope is that stability will be increased for the students and therefore increase academic performance. District 6 hopes to continue not only relationships with each family, but the partnership with the Weld Community Foundation. Their combined goal of long-term student stability for highly mobile students has motivated the partnership with a local foundation and families and they hope this contribution continues to support youth in need.

Essential Element 4—Dedicate Necessary Resources  
Standard 6—Collaborating with the Community



# Summer of Fun and Learning Catalog

## Parr Elementary School

Arvada, CO



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As the school year draws to a close, students and families are looking forward to a summer of fun and adventure. Although Covid-19 restrictions are lifting, there are still many limitations of what families can do with their children. In addition to those limitations, schools also see the summer slide on the horizon. With that in mind, Parr Elementary School staff organized a list of summer family resources into a colorful, easy-to-read, and informative online family

catalog. Parr staff hoped this catalogue would help to build stronger relationships with their families by providing them with resources to continue learning over the summer in a fun and interactive way.

The creation of this online catalog involved Parr's Family Engagement Liaison and Attendance Secretary, as well as the district's Title I Family Engagement Liaison Coordinator. The Title I Family Engagement Coordinator sent an email to all liaisons containing a list of summer opportunities for families. From there, the liaison at Parr Elementary School customized the resources into a format that would resonate with the school's families. Once the content of the online catalog was completed, the attendance secretary at Parr assisted with making the catalog fun and colorful. When the catalog was finalized, it was sent out to all liaisons in the school district who were invited to personalize the front cover and use it for their families as well.

This online catalog is meant to be distributed to families during the last week of school and consists of 13 pages informing families of both local and online opportunities, such as Denver free days, summer learning, family community activities, healthy family ideas, local summer camps, and more. Each section contains a variety of locations and activities for families to engage in will be both fun and educational. Additionally, this online catalog contains friendly features, including hyperlinks and short descriptions of each resource. These features not only help the families determine which opportunities are best for them but will also direct them to each website to explore further and plan their summer visit.

Challenges of creating this online catalogue were minimal. Because the catalog was designed so close to the end of the school year, many other family engagement liaisons were unable to offer the supports to their families. Another challenge was formatting the catalog to be easy to read as well as informative to where families could determine the best opportunities for their family. Lastly, there continues to be the potential challenge of any information changing from the resources provided and being able to make those changes in the catalog and getting the translated catalogs updated as well.

Parr's family engagement liaisons offers the follow advice: "For those who would like to replicate this online catalog for families, it would be beneficial to work from the original that was created and personalizing it as they see fit because starting from scratch could be very time consuming and can feel overwhelming. This would also help with consistency across this district on what families are receiving. It would also be helpful to work with other schools to ensure that there is not any valuable resources or information missing from the catalog that would be good for families to be aware of."

Essential Element 4—Dedicate Necessary Resources

Standard 3—Supporting Student Success

# The Hollys Amazing Team

## Holly Ridge & Holly Hills Elementary Schools

### Denver, CO



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Holly Hills Elementary and Holly Ridge Elementary, both members of the Cherry Creek School District, have partnered with families to improve child welfare by providing resources and guidance to facilitate and improve learning, development, and health of students. This practice has proven to be very effective in establishing communications with families to accomplishing these goals.

School administrators, including the Coordinator of Community and Family Connections, working through the various Family Liaisons, implement the program by honoring and supporting the parent-child relationships that are central to a child's development, school readiness, and wellbeing. Specifically, this is accomplished by continuous communication with participating families to provide resources and information in the areas of food and employment assistance, healthcare, housing, and emergency services. Effective family engagement also facilitates the safety, trust, encouragement and caring that affect the wellbeing of both child and family.

Family Liaisons, along with the social worker, psychologist, and counselors identify families who can benefit from the services provided. By assisting families with these basic needs, the learning experience for the students is enhanced. This provides students with added security and enables them to perform better in the classroom. As a result, participating students can concentrate on learning and the educational experience is improved for the school as a whole. The practice is evaluated through monthly meetings with the head of the family liaisons by reviewing specific situations, asking questions, offering suggestions and ideas, and helping one another.



A few challenges arose in the implementation of this project. The biggest challenge this year was lack of face-to-face interaction. Communication options were limited primarily to telephone calls, email, or texting. Food assistance was difficult, but thanks to various food banks, it was accomplished by drive-through pick up services. The school personnel will forever appreciate and cherish the partnership with students and families throughout the difficult 20-21 school year.

Suggestions and advice for replication of the practice include the review and development of detailed job descriptions as well as a clear organizational structure and reporting hierarchy for liaisons. This, along with the development of best practices guidelines and protocols regarding working and communicating with students and parents, will assist liaisons in performing up to expectations. Liaisons should be provided with staff lists, room assignments and school maps to enable more efficient performance of their assignments.

# Virtual Volunteer Tutors During Remote Learning

Denver Public Schools

Denver, CO



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Department of Education

The Denver Public Schools (DPS) Foundation and Volunteer Services continue their work to address emerging needs for students because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the move to remote learning. Together with DPS leadership, they identified the need to support students academically with virtual volunteers. The virtual learning environment is a challenge to students, educators, and families. DPS worried that the move to virtual learning would disproportionately impact students of color and students experiencing poverty. Therefore, the DPS Foundation and Volunteer Services wanted this year to be a time of increased connection with an intensified focus on equity.

By engaging corporate and community volunteers, DPS sought to support students' growth and learning both while they are in a remote school environment and when they return to the classroom. The program's goal was to provide an opportunity for students to be more engaged with their learning through access to a caring adult that can support their learning goals. The DPS Family and Community Engagement (FACE) - Volunteer Services, Family Empowerment Team, Literacy Buddy Volunteers, DPS Foundation, and School Partners Program Manager all collaborated to get the program up and running.

During the first phase of the program, literacy and/or math tutors were recruited to tutor virtually. Volunteer onboarding included a background check, online volunteer orientation webinar, and a Zoom interview prior to being assigned to a school. Each volunteer met with the teacher to gain information specific to the lessons and assigned students. Additional resources also included tutorials navigating Google Meet, SeeSaw and other district remote resources. The program was evaluated by volunteer tutors self-reporting satisfaction/impact observed when engaging with student(s). The district noted challenges with non-employees (volunteers) restricted access to district sponsored online curriculum. It became challenging for teachers to provide Google Meet links prior to each session at the start of the program. However, once tutors and educators established a routine and a relationship the process was solidified. Students would also sometimes turn off their cameras to avoid answering questions. This was also resolved after the first few weeks of remote learning once the students established a positive relationship with the tutor.

The virtual volunteer program will be conducted again in fall 2021. The district is currently working with the IT team to develop a workaround so volunteers can access district Google Meets and other online resources including SORA so students do not control the shared screen. One volunteer reported, "In some cases, volunteers tutoring English conversation to refugee students where most of the students are women with small children at home, are Muslim and many do not show their faces on the screen. This made teaching a little more challenging, but adult students were very grateful for the opportunity to learn. Just as rewarding, the tutors find it very educational to learn about the students' cultures and religions."

Essential Element 4—Dedicating Necessary Resources

Standard 3—Supporting Student Success

For more information and  
partnering materials:

## **SACPIE**

[www.cde.state.co.us/sacpie](http://www.cde.state.co.us/sacpie)

## **CDE**

[www.cde.state.co.us/uip/familyengagement](http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/familyengagement)

## **Questions**

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