



Speaking a language other than English can present challenges to building relationships between schools and families. In order to remove these obstacles and increase achievement, the Falcon School District 49's English Language Department created a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC).

This Parent Advisory Committee is a place where families can meet and network, and can also learn about grading, testing, school initiatives, resources, and procedures that affect the English Language Department program. The meetings are held quarterly, and include dinner and an agenda where topics from the whole district are shared. The district also provides interpreters. The meetings are continually changing, as the district wants to be sure to meet the current needs of families and students.

Evaluation of the committee meetings is done on both a formal and informal basis; using paper surveys, emailing regarding feedback, and discussing the meetings in person with families. The feedback is used to shape future meetings – for instance, childcare emerged as a significant need, and the district worked to address that by having high school volunteers engage younger children with an activity during the meeting.

Falcon School District 49 believes that these meetings are important because they are able to inform and empower the parent community. In turn, student achievement and success increases through this family involvement. In addition, families have the chance to share their experiences and listen to other families, building the community, and building confidence which influences family involvement in education.

For those who are thinking of holding these types of meetings, this district advises that planning and communicating the event should happen early, so that the topics can be promoted to garner interest from the community. Doing so early also allows planners to get an accurate head count for interpreters and dinner to ensure that all families receive the supports they need.