

# Caminos Partnership Latino Business Luncheon

## Fort Collins High School

### Fort Collins, CO



COLORADO  
Department of Education

Fort Collins High School (FCHS), in partnership with El Centro at Colorado State University (CSU), implemented an innovative program to address some of the issues facing our Hispanic population, 23% of school's student body. Named *Caminos*, this partnership sought to increase the academic achievement of bilingual and predominantly native Spanish speaking students, grades 9-12.

The culminating activity of *Caminos*, at the end of the spring semester, was a Latino Business Luncheon. Successful Latino professionals from the community were contacted either through personal phone calls or email to gauge interest and were subsequently formally invited to participate in an informal business luncheon at Fort Collins High School. Guests included veterinarians, engineers, computer programmers, directors of nonprofits, detectives, lawyers, healthcare providers, and business owners, among others. District administration, CSU partners, and FCHS's graduating Latinos accepted to CSU were also invited.

Each participant received a name tag as they arrived at the luncheon. Students were seated with a professional who held a career that was of interest to them. This also facilitated interaction between students and adults and ensured that youth sat with different peer groups. Students in FCHS' culinary arts classes prepared the luncheon meal. While eating, students asked the professionals questions about high school preparation, post-secondary options, and other career related topics.

The keynote speaker motivated students to "never give up their dreams" and to work to achieve them. One student was inspired to "never forget who you are and that you are the only person that knows your dream and to work to make it happen".

Event organizers offer the following advice about hosting a similar event: "It is very important that a student participate in a career interest survey before inviting community members in. This is to ensure the school invites a sufficient number of guests to seat the students with a professional that matches their career choice. Additionally, don't be afraid to contact community members. Each invited professional was more than willing to take advantage of this opportunity to support young Latino students and, in a way, give back to their community."