

PEN PALS

Boulder Valley School District and Parent Engagement Network Boulder, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Since 2001, Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) and school level administrators and staff have partnered with the Parent Engagement Network-Parent as Leaders in Schools (PEN PALS) volunteers to bring resources to their schools that engage, educate, and empower parents and other supportive adults in a child's life.

The PEN PALS program is aligned with BVSD's Family-School Partnership Initiative that "builds collaborative relationships between schools, families, and the community to support the achievement, success and well-being of every child. BVSD recognizes that every family desires and has an essential role in their children's success."

In the 2017-18 school year, volunteers from multiple schools hosted parent initiated engagement opportunities and educational presentations in their individual schools. This context allowed parents of students of all ages across the district to network, engage in panel discussions, and participate in workshops.

Examples of PEN PALS parent led initiatives in the past year include:

- School hosted screenings of the documentaries 'Angst', and 'Screenagers', with Q & A panels including school counselors and community mental health professionals.
- Opioid Awareness Presentations, in collaboration with The Boulder County Department of Public Health and a discussion panel of youth in recovery.
- An author series, including presentations from nationally known authors like Rachel Simmons who recently released *Enough as She Is*, and Rosalind Wiseman from *Cultures of Dignity, Queen Bees & Wannabees* and *Masterminds & Wingmen*.
- Several presentations of "Smart Parenting in a World of Sexting" - A Collaborative workshop with Zonta Foothills – Advancing the status of women worldwide, Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence (SPAN), Movement to End Sexual Assault (MESA) and the Boulder District Attorney's office.

Perhaps the greatest strength to the BVSD and PEN PALS partnership is its customization. The school based parent engagement model of PEN is not a one-size-fits-all model. It is an expansive, responsive model that can meet the varying needs of districts, schools, and individuals.