

District 11's Vision for Family and Community Engagement

- Vision:
 - To create an inclusive environment where students thrive through active engagement and the support of connected families, staff, and community partners.
- Mission:
 - Enhance educational outcomes by building connections where families, staff, and community partners are empowered to support students success.

Reduced drop-out rates

Higher graduation rates

Increased educational, academic, and social-psychological success

Reduced absenteeism

Better student attitudes towards learning

Stronger social skills

Less discipline issues

Better student-teacher relationships

Higher trust in schools

Stronger levels of cultural competence for staff

Improved image of the school throughout the community

Increased interactions and participation for community partners

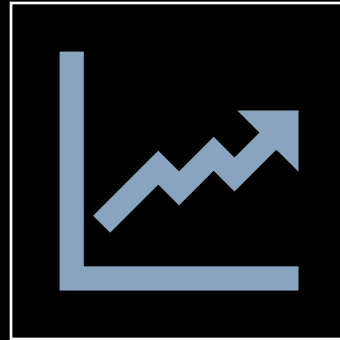
Greater longevity for educators

Start with the Why: What Research Says

District II Family Partnership: Moving From a "Nice to have" to a ***Must have***"



Understanding "Partnership"

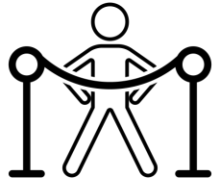


Investing in a Continuum of High Impact Practices



Building a multi-tiered approach to family partnership by identifying engagement opportunities district-wide

Involvement vs. Partnership: What is the Difference?



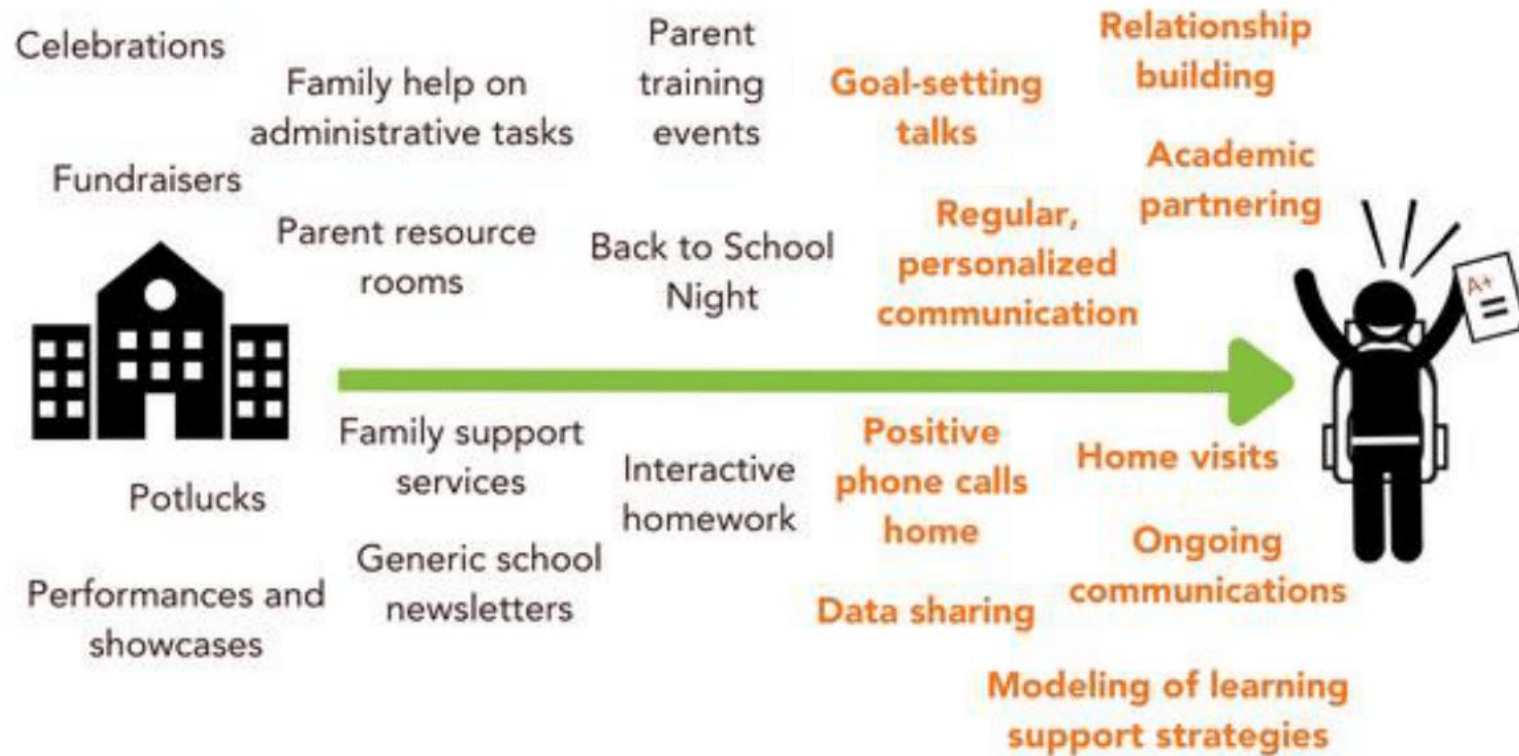
Involvement

- One-way
- School-designed activities
- Exclusive
- Do “to”
- Technical Language



Partnership:

- Two-way
- Co-created activities
- Inclusive
- Do “with”
- Expressive Language



Source: Flamboyan Foundation

- <https://www.cde.state.co.us/familyengagement/2023ppps>

Promising and High Impact Practices

Four Essential Elements to Guide Family, School, Community Engagement



Create an
Inclusive
Culture



Build
Trusting
Relationships



Design
Capacity-Building
Opportunities



Dedicate
Necessary
Resources

Build Trusting Relationships

Essential Element Definition:

- 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 you families to sustain positive relationships?
- How do you leverage relationships with families to achieve your program/district/school goals?

EE2



Building Trusting Relationships

The site invests in building trusting relationships so that families and programs/schools partner about the education outcomes for children and youth.

Reflection Questions:

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

Your Ratings:
(NW, ED, P or E)

Describe the extent to which you feel your site prioritizes developing trusting relationships with families.

Describe two instances in the past 4 months that exemplify how your site has invested in building trust with families.

Describe at least two ways the educators or administration at your site listen to families about their needs or hopes for the site or their child.

Describe how your site includes family engagement as a key lever in achieving goals for the site or children/students.

Ingredients of a Partnership Approach: School leadership, Attention to inequities, Giving voice & sharing power, Programmatic approach, Teamwork & shared leadership, and Evaluation

Building Trusting Relationships

- Welcome All Families
- Communicate Effectively
- Support Student Success

Robust Support in Early Childhood Entry Points Colorado Springs Schools D11 Colorado Springs, CO



The District 11 Early Childhood Education program is committed to building an ecosystem of support for families of young children, and creating systems to remove barriers that can impact access to early childhood services and supports. Enrolling a child in school often can be overwhelming for parents, especially when navigating the additional complexity and anxiety associated with undergoing an evaluation for special education services. To improve ease of access through robust and varied communication, simplified processes, and emphasis on building human connections as a part of the process, District 11 employed a variety of support practices.



This was a collaborative effort of the Director of the Early Childhood program and the Early Childhood Community Liaison working proactively with Child Find Coordinators.

Communication regarding next steps, appointment reminders, and how to reach out with questions was provided to families in their preferred language via email, text messages, and phone calls. When the Early Childhood Education Office, or the family, identified a need for increased support, the Community Liaison provided more direct support through either home visits or in-office appointments. During these in-person meetings, the Community Liaison provided the technology and the step-by-step support to ensure the necessary processes were successfully completed. Interpreters were always included when appropriate.

One parent shared, "I would like to commend your staff on the hospitality and kindness they offered to myself and my daughter during the evaluation process for early development and IEP placement." Another shared that although she was initially overwhelmed with the process and the amount of people in the room, she quickly realized they were focusing on her daughter as a whole child and she now feels like she has a team supporting both family and child.

When a higher layer of support is needed for families experiencing apprehension as a barrier, or who need answers to more technical questions regarding the evaluation process, a meeting with the Child Find Coordinator was offered. From D11's perspective, the primary intention of meetings with the Child Find Coordinator was to build trust between families and the district, empower families to feel confident in supporting the needs of their child, and reduce any anxiety related to engaging in the special education evaluation process.

Family Learning Walk Arrowhead Elementary School Aurora, CO



At Arrowhead Elementary, the goal of hosting a Family Learning Walk was to help families understand what happens during the school day so they can best support their child. This was an opportunity for students' parents, grandparents, and guardians to participate in a tour of the school while active learning was taking place. The school staff received great feedback and families were able to observe the instructional strategies used by the school and compare how their children are being taught in 2024 to their own experience as a youth.

The Family Learning Walk consisted of three parts: a tour, classroom observations, and a teacher panel. To make this event a success, the school principal and teachers had to be on board. The principal asked Arrowhead teachers to volunteer to either be a part of a teacher panel, be a tour guide during the walk, or have an open classroom for observation while teaching students. It was very important for the teachers being observed to feel comfortable and prepared during the observations. Participants were asked not to take any photos or videos while in classrooms, maintain a "fly on the wall" behavior to ensure an authentic learning environment, avoid having conversations in classrooms, honor the privacy of students and teachers, and always stay with the tour group.



Each classroom teacher picked two families to personally invite to the event. The day began with caregivers meeting with administration to learn about the work being done at the school and get a snapshot of the school's academic data. Participants then broke into small tour groups led by staff members. Each group visited three different classrooms and the tour guide helped narrate what they were seeing and answer caregivers' questions. After the tours, they debriefed as a group, discussing what they noticed and wondered about from their observations. They then shared out with the whole group. There was also a presentation from the reading interventionist about how to support their child's literacy development at home. At the end, families were able to pose questions to a panel of 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th grade teachers, as well as the Reading Enrichment teacher. Some of the questions and concerns of the families were about classroom management approaches, how the school addresses bullying, and how teachers meet the needs of a range of students.



For many families, attending a daytime event is a challenge. The Family Learning Walk was scheduled first thing in the morning so that participants could come for the first half and leave if they needed to go to work. To include Arrowhead's multilingual families, interpreters were available if requested. To replicate this event, it is recommended a teacher of each grade level participates on the panel and a classroom observation is available for each grade level. It is also recommended to encourage family members of ethnicities represented in the school community to join by providing interpreters.

Communication Systems Cimarron Middle School Parker, CO



Cimarron Middle School's communication system is proactive, focusing on building positive relationships to support student growth and achievement. The school's communication systems and protocols support staff in implementing effective communication practices. This communication starts with the classroom teachers and the relationships built between students, teachers, and families. At the start of the school year, Cimarron's school leadership team provided professional development for teachers specifically focused on [communication and partnering with families](#). As seen in this [Cimarron Connected video](#), the team set the stage for building relationships and connecting with kids. In addition to professional learning, the school leadership team offered coaching and support for teachers, often before, during, and after parent phone calls. Providing scripts and expectations for positive phone calls and parent-teacher conferences supported the systemic implementation of these high-yield strategies.

The transition to middle school can be a big change, but Cimarron offered coffee talks to help facilitate a smoother transition for students and parents. They value parent feedback, as it helped alleviate some of the stress around this transition. One great aspect of the coffee talks was when students gave a tour from their perspective, allowing parents to ask them questions. Cimarron staff pay special attention to communicating with all students and families. For example, an ELD breakfast mirrored the coffee talk process and involved all ELD teachers from the feeder school to support the students and families.

The administrative team models relationship-building and ongoing communication through weekly staff newsletters and bi-weekly family newsletters. [The January staff newsletter](#) reminded teachers, "As the days are cold and we are not able to get outside this quarter, things might get tough at times. Lean into the relationships that you have developed to foster the environment that you want in our classrooms and school." [Bi-weekly family newsletters](#) provide regular, ongoing communication using a platform that offers translations in multiple languages, facilitating access to information and opportunities that support student success. Cimarron staff have found that highlighting sections, bolding words, and bullet points have helped readers hone in on specific areas of each communication.

Cimarron's commitment to effective communication has improved student outcomes and fostered a positive work environment, leading to high staff retention rates.

Resources

- **CDE Resource Page for Family, School, Community Engagement:** <https://www.cde.state.co.us/familyengagement>
 - Look for the **free courses** on family/community engagement, including one on SAC training put together by Velvet!
- **CDE's High Impact Strategies** (with clickable links for examples!): <https://www.cde.state.co.us/familyengagement/highimpactstrategies>
- **CDE FSCP User's Guide for School Teams:** <https://www.cde.state.co.us/familyengagement/p12fscpframeworkusersguide>

