



Promising Partnerships Practices

2026

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



SACPIE

State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education



COLORADO
Department of Education

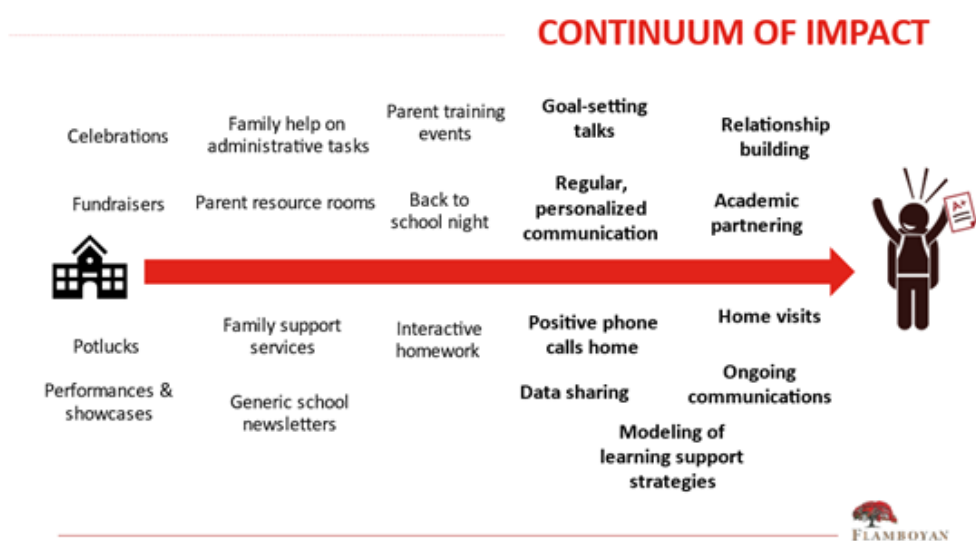


Introduction

The State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) are pleased to share the 2026 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 60 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 50 practices categorized by the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2022) and Colorado's Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP) Framework (CDE, 2020).

Like last year, many of the practices elevated students' voices in FSCP, linked family engagement to the Unified Improvement Plan or district Strategic Plan, and mentioned having a FSCP team. These themes align with the Office of FSCP's [Trail Map for Schools](#) and continue to fall on the "high impact" side of the FSCP continuum.



One new theme this year is an increased number of schools and districts focusing on student belonging and supporting families with basic needs in order to increase student attendance. Many practices also involved multiple schools or districts working together. This is an exciting trend because it highlights the importance of having a statewide network of FSCP support across schools and districts.

Similarly, as in years past, almost every school-level practice in this publication is situated in a district that has identified a FSCP leader to guide and sustain partnership work. And each of those district leaders actively participates in supports offered by the Office of Family, School, and Community Partnerships at CDE. This demonstrates the importance of having a [statewide systemic support structure](#) that cultivates partnerships leading to positive student outcomes (Epstein and Boone, 2022).

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



Back to School Bash

Centauri Middle & High School, North Conejos School District

Submitted by Jessica Shawcroft, jesshawcroft24@northconejos.com

In Fall 2025, Centauri Middle School and High School held the schools' first-ever Back to School Bash. The goal was to kick off the school year with energy and connection while providing families with access to important resources, information, and a strong sense of community.

Centauri Middle School's counselor and Centauri High School's counselor were primarily responsible for the planning and implementation. They aimed to make the event both festive and functional, designed for students, parents, staff, and community members alike.

Local organizations and community partners attended and provided information regarding youth programs, tutoring options, mental health programs, low-income supports, and medical information to families. The planning team invited a variety of food trucks. Staff put out games, physical education equipment, and outdoor activities for families to do together while attending the event. Donated school supplies were available for families and students in need, and the PTO put together information on what they were doing for the school year, as well as a cookie decorating station. Finally, each building offered presentations for families to learn more about how the schools were handling certain topics that school year, with a time for questions afterward. Parents who attended the presentations filled out a raffle ticket to win prizes. The Back to School Bash encouraged families to see the schools, talk to the staff, ask their questions, provide feedback, and enjoy a relaxed and fun evening on campus. Organizers were delighted to see families staying well past the 6:00 p.m. end time to finish their dinner, play games, and enjoy the beautiful evening.



A Google Forms survey was sent to the community partners who attended the Back to School Bash to gauge the overall value of the event, the timeline, the resources offered, and how prepared each partner had felt for the event. A survey was also provided to middle school parents to collect feedback regarding school climate and potential improvements. One challenge noted was that some parents were unsure if the event was just for students or the entire family, highlighting a need for clearer messaging on the schools' part for future events.

The Back to School Bash was highly beneficial for students and families to learn what resources were available within the community, especially since local organizations were eager to increase their public outreach.

Back to School Kick-Off

Weld RE-5J School District

Submitted by Alexandra Ham, alexandra.ham@weldre5j.org

The purpose of the Back-to-School Kick-Off in Weld RE-5J was to provide resources and connections for families before the start of the school year. Many activities were offered, with a focus on mixing business and fun. There were giveaways, food trucks, and donated backpacks. Community partners and building leaders met families and students, while families and community members shopped at the clothing exchange.

The MTSS Coordinator planned and implemented the event with the help of building and district leadership. Area partners included local agencies, businesses, and resource providers, such as a barber shop, United Way, UC Health Safe Kids, and behavioral and mental health support services. School district personnel were available, including registrars, translators, and transportation staff. Representatives for gifted and talented programming as well as music programming were also present. The Weld County Food Bank Mobile Food Truck was on site to pass out food to families. The mobile immunization truck was available, and sports physicals were offered on site as well.

Thirty-three tables were set up as stations for families to visit with partner agencies and school leaders. Six schools and two charters had leaders and other representatives available to meet students and parents, pass out swag, and provide games or activities. The mix of business and fun was evident, with families gathering information and listening to cheers from the high school cheer team. They also took pictures at the photo booth or had their faces painted. The district provided families with lunch, while two local food trucks were available for families to purchase desserts. Backpacks were available for students to pick out once a family verified that their school registration was complete. This allowed roughly 200 families to finalize their online registration details.



Feedback from families and vendors indicated the day was a success, with families feeling prepared for the new year and partners feeling impactful in the community. Two hundred forty-six backpacks found homes. More than 120 households received food. The sports physical line stayed busy for two hours, and six students received TDAP vaccinations. The growth from the previous year was evident to all in attendance. One challenge was that the registration table quickly backed up with families looking to confirm their status and pick out their backpacks. Having the event inside meant more families attended despite the heat, but the trucks outside needed shade. The clothing exchange took a significant investment of time to set up and clean up, and it was deemed likely to be cut the following year. Many families asked for maps of the event so they did not miss important stations. The team also hoped to add vision, hearing, and dental screenings, as well as haircuts moving forward.

The organizers found it necessary to start planning early, as it took time to organize everything and a lot of partners booked up quickly for back-to-school events. It was important to include fun activities for students and families, and to leverage older students as volunteers for setup, takedown, and school spirit during the event.



Building Family Partnerships Through Connection

Discovery High School, Widefield School District 3

Submitted by Dr. Albert Wiggins, wigginsalbert@wsd3.org

As part of its commitment to welcoming all families, Discovery High School (DHS) in Widefield School District 3 established a practice of personally interviewing every prospective student and family interested in attending the school. The goal of this practice was not to determine admission eligibility, but rather to help students and families determine whether Discovery was the best educational fit for their needs and goals.

The principal led the planning and implementation by conducting individual interviews with every prospective student and family. This provided families with a direct connection to school leadership, allowing them to ask questions, share concerns, and learn about the school's programs and expectations. Once students chose to enroll, teachers and support staff became actively involved through a student-parent-teacher orientation process.

During each interview, the principal took time to learn about the student's academic history, interests, goals, and challenges, as well as to provide families with information about the school's unique structure, flexible scheduling options, graduation pathways, and support systems. Families were encouraged to discuss their expectations and ask questions about the school experience. This approach allowed both the family and the school to determine whether DHS was the right fit. Following enrollment, students and families participated in a student-parent-teacher orientation where they met staff members, reviewed expectations, discussed academic goals, and learned about available resources.



This practice had a positive impact on student outcomes and school climate. Students began their DHS experience feeling known and supported, while families developed confidence in the school's commitment to their child's success. The strong relationships established through the interview and orientation process contributed to improved communication, increased family participation, stronger attendance, and greater student engagement.

Staff evaluated the effectiveness of this practice through family feedback, enrollment conversations, participation rates in orientation activities, and ongoing communication between families and school staff. Families consistently expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet with the principal in person and learn about the school before making an enrollment decision. One challenge was accommodating the schedules of working families and students who enrolled throughout the school year. DHS addressed this challenge by offering flexibility in scheduling interviews and orientations. Moving forward, the school planned to incorporate more formal feedback surveys to better measure family satisfaction and the practice's long-term impact on student success.

For schools interested in replicating this practice, the key was for administrators to prioritize relationships before paperwork. As one family shared, "Before our student even started classes, we knew Discovery cared about us and wanted our child to succeed." A welcoming culture began with a genuine conversation, and that conversation could set the stage for lasting student success.



Culture Night Extended: A Digital Cookbook

Foothills Elementary School, Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Katy Evans, katy.evans@jeffco.k12.co.us

Each year, hundreds of families attended Foothills Elementary School's Culture Night to learn about one another through food, music, art, and storytelling. While participation had traditionally been strong, the school recognized an opportunity to broaden engagement by creating more accessible entry points for families who might not yet have felt ready to host a table or take on highly visible roles.



To expand participation, Foothills introduced a series of connected, classroom-based experiences leading up to Culture Night. The week prior, every classroom engaged in a read-aloud of *Let Me Fix You a Plate* by Elizabeth Lilly, a story that explored family, culture, and identity through food. Students then reflected on their own favorite meals through writing and illustration at developmentally appropriate levels. These pieces, featuring meals ranging from arepas to mac and cheese, and hush puppies to chocolate ice, were displayed throughout the hallways, transforming the school into a vibrant celebration of identity and belonging. This approach ensured that every student could “show up” in the event, even without attending or hosting a table. It also created natural opportunities for conversation, connection, and pride among students and families alike. Building on this momentum, families were invited to contribute a favorite recipe to a schoolwide [digital cookbook](#). Recipes could be drinks, desserts, sides, or full dinners, hundred-year-old family traditions, or favorite weekday meals from a website. The resulting collection reflected the richness of the community and offered a lasting resource.

Staff and students responded enthusiastically to the classroom components, noting increased engagement, meaningful conversations, and a strong sense of belonging. Hallways filled with student work sparked ongoing dialogue and curiosity. While family recipe submissions were more limited than hoped, this revealed an important opportunity: intentional outreach, personal invitations, and clear examples could help lower barriers and support broader participation. Future efforts might also include more explicit promotion and opportunities for families to experience one another's recipes. Teachers could increase participation by including submissions as part of homework packets or projects.

By intentionally layering classroom experiences, at-home contributions, and community celebrations, Foothills expanded who could participate and how. Moving forward, the school plans to continue integrating inclusive, interactive pre-events to ensure that Culture Night remains not just well attended, but truly representative, collaborative, and rooted in the strengths of every family.

Early Childhood Family Connection

Partner Elementary Schools, Lewis-Palmer School District 38

Submitted by Camie Dukes, cdukes@lewispalmer.org



The Early Childhood Program at Lewis-Palmer School District believes that families are essential partners in their child's education and are dedicated to fostering a sense of belonging within the school community. The friendships formed among families during these early years often last throughout the entire school experience. Because of this, Lewis-Palmer implemented the Early Childhood Family Connection with Bear Creek Elementary School, Lewis-Palmer Elementary School, and Palmer Lake Elementary School.

Several times throughout the year, families were invited to come to school 45 minutes before pickup. The purpose of these gatherings was to help build relationships between families, give families a glimpse into the classroom and what their children were experiencing, and gather family input on what they were looking for in an early childhood program to better meet their needs.

The overall structure began with a connection time followed by time within the classroom. The preschool director welcomed families and facilitated several small group discussions. For example, at the beginning of the year, participants were encouraged to brainstorm responses regarding what they hoped their children would gain most from preschool—whether academic skills, social-emotional growth, independence, or something else. They also discussed what they envisioned seeing and hearing in a great preschool classroom, and what they, as a family, wanted from the early childhood program.

After the discussions, families were invited into the classroom to participate in an activity. Activities ranged from friendship lessons taught through literature to end-of-unit showcases. For example, the teacher read "The Rainbow Fish" while families sat on the floor with their children. The children were then given clothespins and taught the language of sharing, such as stating that they would give a peer a blue clothespin and asking if they could have a red one. To motivate sharing, the bags of clothespins contained only one to two colors, so to create a rainbow, students needed to trade. Another example was the teacher sharing various learning experiences the children engaged in during a specific unit, one of which culminated in a successful fashion show as an end-of-unit celebration featuring clothing the children had decorated, such as tie-dyed t-shirts, decorated vests, and hats.

Encouraging family participation was a key component of the program. When personal invitations came from teachers and children were excited about the end-of-unit celebration, attendance increased.

By hosting intentional gatherings, the Early Childhood Family Connection program ensured that families were valued partners, fostering a strong sense of belonging that supported the child's educational foundation and lasted throughout their school years.

Early Childhood Toddler and Parent Playgroup

Colorado Springs School District 11

Submitted by Angie Boucher, angela.boucher@d11.org

The goal of D11's Early Childhood Playgroup Program was to create welcoming, inclusive opportunities for families with children ages 0–3 to build connections with one another, engage in meaningful early learning experiences, and develop positive relationships with schools before formal enrollment. Recognizing that a family's first experiences with the educational system can significantly influence future engagement and partnership, D11 sought to establish trust, reduce barriers to participation, and foster a strong sense of belonging within the school community.

The D11 Early Childhood Playgroup was developed by district early childhood staff, families, and community partners. Planning began by identifying opportunities to connect families with young children to one another, for families to learn the importance of play and reading to their children, and to provide resources to families. The Early Childhood Department played a primary role in designing and coordinating the program.

The program provided regularly scheduled opportunities for families to participate in developmentally appropriate play experiences that promoted early learning, social-emotional development, language acquisition, and school readiness. Caregivers actively engaged alongside their children in activities that encouraged exploration, creativity, communication, and positive interactions. Families were welcomed into elementary school libraries for interactive story times. They were also invited to participate in classroom open houses and had opportunities to meet school staff prior to enrollment. These experiences helped children and families become comfortable in school environments before entering preschool or kindergarten.



The D11 Early Childhood Playgroup was evaluated through ongoing family feedback and participation data. Parents and caregivers completed surveys three times a year to provide input regarding program quality, accessibility, family satisfaction, and the impact of the playgroups on their connection to the school community. Survey responses helped the district identify strengths, assess family needs, and improve programming. Families consistently reported that the playgroups helped them feel more connected to other parents, more comfortable in school settings, and better informed about available resources and educational opportunities.

One challenge was ensuring that the program met the diverse needs of families across the district. Families differed in language, schedules, transportation access, and children's developmental and sensory needs. This was addressed by expanding programming to include bilingual Spanish-English playgroups, sensory-sensitive playgroups, and opportunities hosted within school buildings to increase accessibility and engagement.

To replicate the program, the planning team recommends organizing welcoming, low-pressure opportunities for families to connect with one another and with schools. They suggest sites offer simple activities that caregivers could easily do with their children and provide resources about child development. Establishing a no-cell-phone environment (except for emergencies) encourages families to be fully present, engage in meaningful play, and build stronger connections.



Family Food Centers and Farmers' Markets

Aurora Public Schools

Submitted by Jada Ruiz, jeruizcastro@aurorak12.org

The goal of Aurora Public Schools' Family Food Centers and Farmers' Markets was to increase access to fresh, nutritious food while reducing barriers to support services for families experiencing food insecurity. By increasing access to healthy food, the program helped create the conditions necessary for students to arrive at school ready to learn.

Planning and implementation of the Family Food Centers and Farmers' Markets was a collaborative effort involving the Community Health Coordinator, school administrators, Family Liaisons, district departments, community partners, and parent volunteers. Family and community feedback played a key role in shaping program design, food offerings, and service delivery to ensure the programs remained responsive to the needs and preferences of families.

Family Food Centers operated year-round at designated school sites and provided families with access to nutritious groceries through a choice-based model, allowing participants to select foods that best met their household needs, cultural preferences, and dietary considerations. In addition to food access, families were connected to school- and community-based resources that supported overall well-being.



Farmers' Markets were hosted at schools throughout the district and provided fresh produce and healthy food items directly within the communities where families lived and learned. By bringing food access into school spaces, the program reduced transportation barriers and increased opportunities for families to engage with their schools.

Program staff tracked the number of families served, food distributed, and attendance trends across sites. Families were regularly surveyed to assess satisfaction, accessibility, and program impact, while school staff and community partners provided feedback on implementation and opportunities for improvement. This data was used to refine services, adjust food offerings, and strengthen resource connections.

One of the primary challenges during implementation was scaling the program while maintaining consistency and fidelity to its core values across multiple sites. Expanding districtwide required significant coordination, staff training, and relationship-building with schools and community partners. Additionally, balancing operational efficiency with a choice-based, culturally sustaining approach required intentional planning.

For districts interested in replicating this practice, it was advised to stay grounded in the core values that drove the work. When launching a districtwide initiative, it could be tempting to prioritize efficiency over impact, but maintaining fidelity to food-as-medicine, choice methodology, and culturally sustaining practices was essential. As one program leader shared, "The success of the program comes from staying true to the mission, even when doing so requires more time, coordination, and resources."

Family Night: Rooted in the Past, Soaring into the Future

Shawsheen Elementary School, Greeley-Evans School District 6

Submitted by Lizbeth Arce Mendez, larcemendez1@greeleyschools.org

Shawsheen Elementary School's Family Night was a schoolwide 50th Anniversary celebration bringing together students, families, staff, and community members to honor five decades of learning, growth, and connection. The event, themed "Rooted in the Past, Soaring into the Future," invited families to explore the building and engage in interactive experiences that highlighted student learning and school history.

The school's Family Engagement Team planned and implemented this once in a lifetime evening. A kindergarten teacher served as the lead for this event. Planning involved many staff members who collaborated on activities, outreach, and logistics. A key partner for this event was a grandparent of a student and a member of the Lakota Nation, who helped ensure an authentic representation of Indigenous cultures.

One highlight of the celebration was highlighting student work from every grade level. Preschool students showcased their creativity with handprint artwork featuring the number "50." Kindergarten students wrote birthday cards to Shawsheen. First graders designed maps highlighting their favorite parts of the school. Second graders created one-pagers titled "All About Shawsheen." Third graders created compare and contrast trifolds that examined the past and present. Fourth graders wrote letters to future students. Fifth graders crafted a timeline of Shawsheen and made a video expressing what they love and will miss about the school. Students in the Intensive Autism program also created handprint artwork featuring the number "50."



Families participated in hands-on activities such as birthday hat decorating, trivia games, a memory book station, a "We Love Shawsheen" mural, and a Shawsheen Museum featuring artifacts and "then and now" displays. The evening included cultural presentations by Kalpulli Yohualli Ehecatl and Indigenous Corporation 5280, as well as musical performances by the SparrowSingers Choir.

Family Night increased student engagement, creativity, and ownership of learning through project-based experiences. It strengthened communication skills and deepened students' understanding of history and community identity. Family Night supported a positive school climate by promoting cultural awareness and building a strong sense of belonging and school pride.

The Family Engagement Team reflected on Family Night by reviewing successes, areas for growth, and feedback received from families and community members. This event had an exceptionally high turnout. One challenge was the overwhelming interest in the presentations by Kalpulli Yohualli Ehecatl and Indigenous Corporation 5280, which resulted in limited space in the gymnasium. In the future, the team planned to explore the possibility of scheduling multiple presentation times.

Advice for replicating a Family Night such as this is to build strong partnerships with families and community members when organizing multicultural events or culturally focused celebrations. Parents, grandparents, and community partners are the experts in their own cultures, traditions, and lived experiences.

Fifth Grade Transition Night

Wellington Middle School, Poudre School District

Submitted by Ana Venzor & Aida Hilda Rodriguez, avenzortrevizo@psdschools.org

To build strong home-school partnerships that ensure a successful bridge to middle school, Wellington Middle School hosted a 5th Grade Transition Night. The goal was to cultivate a sense of belonging and self-efficacy for fifth-grade students and their families by providing equitable access to secondary school pathways and fostering social-emotional readiness.

Wellington's Family Liaison and the McKinney-Vento Advocate led the event, with support from the Family Liaisons at Rice Elementary School and Eyestone Elementary School. They worked in close cooperation with the Wellington Middle/High School (WMHS) staff, who provided the necessary tools and resources to make this event a success.

The 5th Grade Transition Night served as a vital bridge for students and families. It was an evening dedicated to demystifying the middle school experience through guided tours, academic overviews, and social-emotional workshops. By bringing together the Family Liaisons, advocates, and school staff, Wellington Middle School provided a supportive environment where questions were answered, anxieties were eased, and the foundation for future success was built.

The success of the 5th Grade Transition Night was evaluated through a mixed-methods approach. Staff utilized post-event surveys to measure family confidence levels and tracked attendance to ensure diverse representation across the district. During the event, staff conducted informal "check-ins" with families to gather real-time feedback on the clarity of the information provided by the WMHS staff.

To replicate this practice, organizers recommend prioritizing early cross-site collaboration. Building a strong bridge between elementary advocates and secondary staff ensured no student fell through the cracks.



Girls on the Run

Mission Viejo Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Sandra Zimmerman, Szimmerman4@cherrycreekschools.org

Founded in 1996, Girls on the Run (GOTR) was created as an international nonprofit program that serves over two million girls. It is an evidence-based program that inspires participants to recognize their inner strength, increase their level of physical activity, imagine their possibilities, and confidently stand up for themselves and others. The goal for the program is to activate “Star Power” (their uniqueness) and a growth mindset. Mission Viejo Elementary School participated in the 3rd–5th grade GOTR program for the past three years.

Several teachers at Mission Viejo coordinated GOTR. These teachers coached and trained with the girls while teaching valuable classroom lessons in self-confidence. Weekly lessons focused on shifting from a fixed mindset (“I can’t run this far” or “I’m not good at this”) to a growth mindset (“I can pace myself” and “Mistakes help me learn”). Girls learned concrete strategies to process negative emotions, navigate peer pressure, and stand up for themselves and others. Because Title I schools often serve highly diverse student populations, school-day social groups could sometimes feel fragmented. GOTR allowed for peer relationships between girls from different grade levels, classrooms, and social circles. The shared vulnerability of physical training broke down barriers, replacing cliques with a tight-knit sisterhood built on mutual encouragement. With staff members serving as coaches, the students got to see their educators outside the traditional classroom setting—sweating, laughing, and pushing through challenges right alongside them. This changed how the girls viewed school staff, building deep trust and creating a network of safe, supportive adults.



In the spring, the program culminated in the celebratory Girls on the Run 5K. The principal joined the team on the run. The event brought families, teachers, and neighbors together to cheer, creating a massive wave of community pride that lifted the spirits of the entire school. Families were given the opportunity to register for and run the 5K with their girls. The program included mothers, fathers, and siblings who participated. The aunt of a student even ran with the team one year and subsequently signed up to coach the following year. Any staff member was welcome to run with the participants and support their current or former students.

The teachers involved experienced no challenges in the program and will continue facilitating Girls on the Run every year. The most important piece of advice for the school staff who are coordinating the program is to be prepared to run with the girls!

Multilingual Family Book Club

Bamford and Timnath Elementary Schools Poudre School District

Submitted by Rachel Davis, radavis@psdschools.org

The English Language Development (ELD) teachers and Family Liaison of Bamford Elementary School and Timnath Elementary School identified a need for more connection among multilingual families in their school communities. While many families of diverse cultures were present in the two school communities, these families had often been somewhat isolated and had not always felt welcomed in school events and activities.

To address these challenges, staff created the Multilingual Family Book Club. The goal was to provide connection and belonging for families of multilingual students at Bamford and Timnath Elementary Schools. Additional benefits included English language acquisition opportunities for parents and students, parenting skills and support for caregivers, student learning around philanthropy, and empowerment for families through giving back to the community.

The ELD teachers and Family Liaison from both schools worked with the McKinney-Vento and FSCP District Advocate of Poudre School District to plan and implement the book club. Principals from both schools were also involved and supportive. The team collaborated with the Otter Cares Foundation, the philanthropic organization of OtterBox, to provide supplies for children to participate in Project Heart lessons while their parents attended the book club. Project Heart was a philanthropic education program designed to teach students about philanthropy and how to become community leaders.

The book club strengthened connections between parents and children, between families in the Bamford and Timnath school communities, and between families and the wider school community. The book selected for the book club was *The 5 Love Languages of Children* by Gary Chapman, with copies in both English and Spanish.



During the Multilingual Family Book Club, parents practiced oral language skills and self-advocacy, while sharing their learning and reflecting together in rich discussions. Parents discussed the challenges and joys of parenting. Book club sessions ended with a potluck, a social gathering, and a brainstorming session about how to extend their connections into the coming school year and implement the five love languages with their children.

The ELD teachers evaluated the practice formatively through activities that assessed the learning that took place during the sessions. Parents were consulted after sessions to ensure that their preferences and needs were being met. Challenges experienced included consistent attendance among all the families invited and the creation of family routines around reading and literacy.

To implement a practice such as this, facilitators need to provide choices to families regarding activities, books to study, and meeting times. It is also highly beneficial to have intentional plans for childcare. Most of all, it is important to remain flexible and empower families to provide input on implementation and how they could best connect with one another.



Praying and Fasting Club

Holly Hills/Holly Ridge Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Najma Hassan, nhassan3@cherrycreekschools.org

Holly Hills is an elementary school that is a melting pot of students from many different backgrounds and cultures. The goal of the Praying and Fasting Club was to create a safe and welcoming space for Muslim students to pray and practice their religion during the school day.



THE HOLLIES

Holly Ridge Primary & Holly Hills Elementary

The planning and implementation involved the community liaison, principal, library staff, students, and parents. Collaboration between school staff and administration helped create a comfortable and respectful environment for fasting students.

Discussions with the principal led to the creation of a space in the library for fasting students during Ramadan where students could get away from the temptations and smell of food in the cafeteria. Students used the library space to relax, participate in quiet activities, and learn more about Ramadan together. An activity table provided drawings, crossword puzzles, bracelets, and educational quizzes related to Ramadan and Islamic traditions. Instead of students wandering around during lunch with nothing to do, a structured and respectful environment was available where students felt comfortable and understood.

This practice positively impacted students by helping them feel seen, valued, and included in the school community. The practice also helped build confidence and belonging among Muslim students. Other students and staff became more aware of Ramadan and learned about different cultures and traditions. The practice supported a positive school climate by encouraging respect, inclusion, and cultural understanding among students and staff members.

The practice was evaluated mainly through feedback from students, parents, and staff members. Students shared that greater comfort was experienced during Ramadan because of the availability of a safe and quiet place during lunchtime. Parents expressed appreciation for the school recognizing and supporting religious practices. Staff members noticed that students participating in the program were more engaged and comfortable during the school day. No major challenges occurred during implementation because of the support provided by the principal and staff from the beginning. One small challenge was making sure students had enough activities to stay engaged during lunch, but this was addressed by preparing different educational and creative activities ahead of time.

For schools wanting to replicate this practice, communication with students and families was important to ensure everyone felt respected and included. Support from school leadership was also essential. Creating even a small safe space could make a meaningful difference for students.

Salsa Contest and Guacamole-Making Demonstration

Adams 12 Five Star Schools

Submitted by Viviane Mendez, men024168@adams12.org

The Salsa Contest and Guacamole-Making Demonstration were developed to celebrate family assets, increase student leadership, and foster a positive school climate. Pathway Future Center School in Adams 12 Five Star Schools serves a diverse, bilingual community. As such, staff prioritize engagement opportunities that honor culture and elevate student voice.

The planning and implementation team included a cross-section of diverse perspectives, including the Family Outreach Liaison, the English Language Development teacher, parents, and students. Parents led cultural and instructional aspects, while students played a key role in preparation, hosting, and execution. Staff supported coordination, communication, and logistics to ensure events were inclusive, organized, and accessible to all families.

For the Salsa Contest, families signed up to submit homemade salsa that they brought in on the day of the event. Student leaders prepared all salsa bottles, created and decorated the voting box, designed the tasting table, and served as hosts during the event. Students managed the sampling table, welcomed families, explained the process, and engaged in conversations about ingredients, spice levels, and their own family recipes.

Parent volunteers, with student support, led the Guacamole-Making Demonstration. Students helped set up and decorate the space and assisted with organizing materials. During and after the demonstration, students helped distribute guacamole throughout the school so that every student and staff member could participate



These practices strengthened student outcomes by fostering leadership, communication skills, and cultural pride. Students saw their identities and family traditions valued, which increased engagement and belonging. The events also enhanced the school climate by bringing together families, students, and staff in joyful collaboration, reinforcing trust, connection, and shared ownership of the school community.

The practice was evaluated through attendance, student participation, and informal feedback from families, students, and staff. Feedback consistently highlighted increased student pride, family connection, and a positive school climate. Challenges included managing space and ensuring equitable student participation. These were addressed through clear roles, advance planning, bilingual communication, and strong collaboration with student leaders and parent volunteers.

For those hoping to replicate this practice, organizers advised centering student leadership and family expertise from the start, emphasizing culture and joy. One parent shared, “I would do it again because preparing a typical dish from our land is a beautiful thing, and teaching today’s youth about our roots and culture, so they don’t lose the tradition of eating guacamole and so future generations can continue to enjoy the food of their country, is wonderful.”

Super Saturdays

Highline Community Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Najma Hassan, nhassan3@cherrycreekschools.org

At Highline Community Elementary School, meeting families where they were was a priority, especially for those whose work schedules and responsibilities had made it difficult to participate in school activities during the week. While resources such as food, clothing, and school supplies were important, the time, care, and dedication invested in supporting families were equally valuable.

To address this, the school created Super Saturdays. The goal of these events was to strengthen family engagement, promote literacy, and connect families with available resources. Through the leadership of the librarian, families were invited to explore the library and learn how reading, listening to stories, and spending time with children around books could support literacy development. In addition, families were introduced to the school's wellness resources through the school's community boutique.

The boutique provided clothing, shoes, food, toys, hygiene products, and other essential items. Highline serves a diverse population, including families who face challenges related to food security, clothing, and other basic needs. Recognizing that many families may be hesitant to communicate their needs, staff worked to create a welcoming environment where support could be accessed without stigma.

The success of Super Saturdays depended on collaboration among teachers, staff, administrators, and volunteers. Multiple communication methods, including emails, text messages, videos, and flyers, were used to promote the events and encourage participation. The boutique was organized like a store, allowing families to shop independently and comfortably. This approach helped students and families feel respected while providing access to resources that supported both academic success and overall wellbeing.

The program's impact was evident through positive survey responses, written feedback from families, and recognition from district leadership. Families reported feeling supported, and staff observed increased trust and engagement among both students and parents. Challenges included recruiting enough volunteers to support both the library and boutique activities, which occasionally affected organization and efficiency.

For schools interested in implementing a similar program, gathering community input through surveys is highly recommended. Understanding families' scheduling needs and interests could improve participation and ensure the event reflected community priorities. Offering a variety of educational and resource-based activities could also create a welcoming environment that encouraged meaningful family engagement.



Welcome Kits

Dos Rios Elementary School, Greeley-Evans School District 6

Submitted by Natalie Rodarte, nrodarte2@greeleyschools.org

During the 2025-26 school year, many parents at Dos Rios Elementary School were navigating the education system for the first time alongside their children. To bridge this gap, Dos Rios staff created Welcome Kits. The goal was to provide essential school information and community resources to families at the beginning of their educational journey. When students enrolled mid-year or even at the start of the term, miscommunications arose if families were unfamiliar with school operations. These kits included attendance policies featuring a concise "snapshot" for quick reference, as well as an extensive directory of community resources such as community events, food options, contacts in case of emergency, and library resources. Notably, the kits provided specialized mental health support information covering areas such as postpartum depression, chronic illness, grief support groups, and veteran services.



Dos Rios' school counselor initiated the idea of Welcome Kits. Following this suggestion, the Parent and Family Advocate took the lead in curating and selecting the specific materials and resources included in each kit. This collaborative effort ensured that the final product combined professional guidance with practical, high-utility resources tailored to the specific needs of the school community.

The Welcome Kits provided a starting point for identifying and addressing the root causes of challenges families were experiencing. While many families were open with their children's schools, others were more reserved. Because a student's home environment could significantly impact their experience and performance at school, it was important for teachers and staff to understand any circumstances that were affecting the student.

Parent feedback primarily reflected positive surprise about the Welcome Kits. Key implementation challenges included tailoring resources to meet the specific needs of families based on student age and grade level. Additionally, maintaining the accuracy of the information within each kit required consistent oversight and frequent updates.

For those looking to replicate the Welcome Kit practice, prioritizing organization and ensuring all information is accurate and up-to-date is essential. It is highly recommended to include a formal disclaimer stating that the school is not officially associated with the community resources, external events, or any costs/charges incurred through those third-party providers. Maintaining a structured system for reviewing these kits annually or each semester ensured that families received the most reliable support available.



Beginning-of-Year Family Interviews Led by Teachers

Lincoln Elementary School, Thompson School District

Submitted by Brandi Stott and Tanya Santacruz, brandi.stott@tsd.org

The goal of the Beginning-of-Year Family Interviews at Lincoln Elementary School was to build trusting, collaborative relationships between teachers and families, creating a welcoming school environment that supported student success. Recognizing that many teachers lacked formal training in family engagement, Lincoln prioritized proactive outreach. By understanding families' lived experiences and communication preferences from day one, the school aimed to foster an asset-based, inclusive community where every family felt they truly belonged.



The principal and the Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP) Liaison led the planning, structured the initial training with the help of the Coaction Collective, and conducted follow-up empathy interviews. Licensed teachers were central to implementation, conducting the interviews and utilizing the insights to support students.

The practice began at the end of the 2024–2025 school year with comprehensive teacher training on family engagement. Over the summer, teachers reflected on a set of guiding interview questions designed to uncover families' cultural traditions, educational experiences, lived experiences, hopes for their child, and signs that a student might be struggling.

During the first week back at school for staff of the 2025–2026 school year, teachers were given dedicated time to call every family. These calls served to introduce the teacher, personally invite families to the Back-to-School BBQ, and either conduct or schedule the interview. Most teachers completed the interviews during this initial call, aiming for a 100% completion rate by the end of August. To ensure equity, Lincoln provided interpretation and translation services.

The practice was evaluated using both survey data and qualitative feedback. Teachers submitted the completed family interview responses, while the FSCP team conducted empathy interviews and post-conference surveys. These surveys confirmed that most families felt welcomed and trusted their child's teacher.

The primary challenge experienced during implementation was a strain on internal staff culture. Dedicating scarce time during the start of the year to family phone calls meant sacrificing valuable team-bonding time for the staff. In the future, the FSCP team will extend the completion deadline through September.

The school found it beneficial to provide teachers with training early—such as at the end of the prior school year—so the concepts could "marinate" over the summer. Ensuring equitable access by providing translation devices was also critical. As one participating coordinator noted, meaningful communication was essential for "helping families feel seen, heard, and valued as partners." Last but not least, the administration needed to schedule time for it, as it was considered the important work.



Building Family Partnerships Through Clarity, Access, and Relationships

Mountain View High School, Thompson School District

Submitted by Dan Cowgill, dan.cowgill@tsd.org

During the 2025–2026 school year, Mountain View High School focused on strengthening family partnerships by making school systems more accessible, improving communication, and creating more intentional opportunities for two-way engagement with families. This work centered on building consistent systems that helped families feel welcomed, informed, and connected throughout the school year.



To kick the school year off, staff members made welcoming phone calls, giving families a way to begin the academic year by initiating positive relationships with staff. These conversations focused on introductions, support, encouragement, and helping families feel connected to the school community. The calls helped shift communication from being primarily reactive to more relationship-centered and proactive. Families frequently shared appreciation for hearing positive outreach from school staff early in the year, and staff reported that the early connections helped create stronger trust and more productive communication throughout the year.

That year, Mountain View rebranded its School Accountability Committee (SAC) into the Family School Partnership Committee. This rebrand pushed the SAC to move beyond traditional informational meetings to create a more collaborative partnership between families and the school. The committee included family members, staff, and administrators. The committee served as an ongoing feedback loop that directly informed school practices and family outreach efforts. Family feedback helped shape conference structures, communication supports, informational resources, and future engagement events. This process allowed the school to adjust throughout the year based on actual family experiences and needs rather than assumptions.

Mountain View High School also developed “Lion Bytes,” a series of short family support videos created to simplify high school systems and provide families with quick, accessible information they could revisit as needed. Videos focused on practical topics families identified as important, including Infinite Campus, Google Classroom, attendance, grades, credits, communication tools, and supporting students academically at home. The videos were shared through newsletters, social media, and school communication platforms, with translation support included when possible. By providing short, on-demand resources, the school was able to reduce confusion around school systems and increase family confidence in navigating high school processes.

Together, these practices helped strengthen communication and trust between families and the school while improving family access to important information and systems. The school observed increased family engagement with communication platforms, stronger participation in family events and feedback opportunities, and more consistent two-way communication throughout the year.

Most importantly, these efforts helped reinforce the belief that effective family partnership at the secondary level was not built through one event or program, but through ongoing systems that prioritized relationships, clarity, responsiveness, and access.

Building Family-Educator Partnerships

New Vista High School, Boulder Valley School District

Submitted by Marisela Maneiro-Goodwin, marinela.maneiro-goodwin@bvsd.org



This year, the Family and Educators Together (FET) team at New Vista High School in Boulder Valley School District focused on deepening trust, especially with new and Latino families. By aligning efforts around relationships first and information second, there was stronger participation, better coordination across parent groups, and more consistent engagement in learning.

To accomplish this, the FET Team centered weekly positive outreach. During weekly staff meetings, staff completed positive phone calls or emails to families. These strengths-based touch points reframed home-school communication around student growth and connection. The FET Team also reimagined New Families Welcome Night by replacing a presentation-heavy agenda with community-building circles and relational activities. Families met key staff and one another, shared hopes for the year, and left with clear next steps for staying involved. School information was streamlined into take-home resources and follow-up messages. To reach and reflect Latino families, the FET Team produced a short, bilingual promotional video featuring families. The video highlighted the school's values, how to get involved, and where to find help.

FET parents personally called other parents to invite them to meetings. This peer-to-peer outreach increased trust and turnout, especially for families who were newer to the school or preferred personal connections. For the first time, representatives from the School Accountability Committee (SAC), Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), and FET met together to learn each group's role, coordinate calendars, and identify shared priorities. This created a unified family engagement ecosystem. Coordinating SAC, PTO, and FET clarified pathways for involvement and reduced mixed messages.

Through these relational practices, New Vista saw increased participation at FET meetings, with more first-time attendees and more families returning. Additionally, there was stronger representation of Latino families in meetings and feedback loops. Staff also logged more positive touch points with families.

To replicate these efforts, the school staff recommend building positive outreach into existing structures (e.g., 10 minutes in weekly staff meetings); flipping the script on welcome events by using circles and storytelling, and sending dense information as follow-ups; recruiting a small parent-calling team and providing simple scripts in families' home languages; evaluating progress by monitoring attendance, languages reached, and positive contacts; and celebrating small wins.

New Vista High School staff plan to sustain weekly positive outreach, host joint SAC/PTO/FET forums on priority topics families choose, and expand bilingual media. Together, families and educators built a school culture where relationships drove learning—and every voice helped lead the way.



Good News Sharing System

Foothills Elementary School, Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Katy Evans, katy.evans@jeffco.k12.co.us

Too often, communication from school to home is associated with concerns around behavior, attendance, or performance. Foothills Elementary School set out to change this narrative by prioritizing communication that built connection, trust, and a shared sense of purpose. In Winter 2026, the school launched a positive communication system as part of its family engagement efforts.

Using a simple Google Form and spreadsheet, the process was efficient and inclusive. Each week, teachers received an automated email with three randomly selected students and a link to a brief form. It took less than two minutes for teachers to identify at least one way each student had demonstrated growth or made a positive contribution to the classroom. This ensured that recognition was not limited to a small group of students, but instead allowed teachers to notice the growth and strengths of all students.

The family engagement liaison compiled the responses and made weekly phone calls to the families to share the good news. Each call began with reassurance that the message was positive, helping to shift the emotional experience families often associated with school communication. The caller shared specific examples of student success and explained how these actions contributed to learning and belonging, communicating in a way that was clear, personal, and strengths-based.

These conversations were intentionally designed to build relationships. Families were encouraged to celebrate their efforts, reinforcing their role as essential partners in their child's success and helping to create a network of encouragers around each student.

The impact was immediate and meaningful. In just the first few months, over 200 positive connections were made and the school was on track to make a call about every student by the end of the year. Families responded with gratitude and stories of the work happening at home to support their child. Students returned to school reporting with pride that they received a positive call and knowing their efforts were recognized beyond the classroom. Staff reported that when challenges arose, prior positive communication made it easier to have productive, trust-based conversations. Through these phone calls, Foothills Elementary School built trust through proactive outreach.

While the initiative has shown early success, school staff continue to refine the system. Increasing staff participation and expanding the number of callers are key next steps to ensure more families receive the positive outreach.

Good News Sharing System

187024e@jeffcoschools.us [Switch account](#)

Not shared

Teacher Email

katy.evans@jeffco.k12.co.us

Student Name 1

a

What is this student (1) doing well?

- ☐ Literacy growth
- ☐ Math growth
- ☐ Sustaining Attention
- ☐ Social Emotional Skill Improvement
- ☐ Other: _____

OPTIONAL: Write anything else positive you want me to tell this student's (1) family!

Your answer

Student Name 2

r

What is this student (2) doing well?

- ☐ Literacy growth
- ☐ Math growth
- ☐ Sustaining Attention



Individual Career and Academic Planning Conferences

Olathe Middle/High School, Montrose County RE-1J

Submitted by Danie Brew, idane.brew@mcscd.org

At Olathe Middle and High School, Individual Career and Academic Planning (ICAP) focused on helping students explore career interests and prepare for future goals. Students met regularly with their advisor to review academic progress, discuss career pathways, and select courses that aligned with their interests and postsecondary plans. Scheduled parent conferences were held to involve families in the planning process, review student progress, and ensure that course selections supported each student's educational and career aspirations.

ICAP was a collaborative process involving teachers, counselors, and the guidance secretary. Together, they supported students in developing academic and career plans, reviewing course selections, and ensuring graduation requirements were met. This team worked closely with students and families to provide guidance, maintain accurate records, and help students prepare for future educational and career opportunities.

The ICAP conferences were organized by the counseling department overall but certain tasks were delegated to each advisor. The counseling department did the training for advisors (teachers) and scheduled time and agenda items for the advisor. They would meet with their group of students during scheduled advisory time and go over specific items each meeting. Advisors met with students three times before the scheduled parent meeting.

Families were sent notifications letting them know that ICAP conferences were coming up. Each advisor reached out to families via the Talking Points app or a personal phone call to assign a scheduled time. Conferences were scheduled for 20 minutes. If a family was hard to get a hold of, the student would call the parent during the advisory time and set the appointment. Conferences are also posted on the website. All communications sent home were in Spanish and English, with translators available at the conferences. The conferences were in the spring during regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference times.

The meaningful conversations during ICAP conferences helped students establish clear goals and understand the connection between their current academic performance and future opportunities. ICAP conferences also strengthened communication and collaboration between the school and families, creating a supportive network focused on student success. Additionally, ICAP conferences provided valuable data regarding student interests, needs, and future aspirations.

Effective ICAP planning and implementation required well-organized conferences that supported student success and graduation readiness. Teachers had to be trained on graduation requirements and ICAP expectations to provide accurate guidance. School staff had time with students and parents to review goals, progress, and postsecondary plans. Clear and timely communication of conference dates and times was essential to ensure strong participation and meaningful collaboration among all stakeholders.

Lew's Clues

Ryan Elementary School, Boulder Valley School District

Submitted by Amber Lewandowski, amber.lewandowski@bvsd.org

In a school that values strong partnerships between home and classroom, Lew's Clues was created to strengthen family engagement and support meaningful conversations about student learning.



Ryan Elementary School

In Ryan Elementary's kindergarten classroom, families received one short daily "clue" that hinted at something their child learned or experienced during the school day.

Planning and implementation of Lew's Clues were led within the kindergarten classroom. Each day, families received one short "clue" by email or through the TalkingPoints app that hinted at something about their child's school day. The clues were intentionally brief, playful, and specific to encourage curiosity and conversation. Examples included prompts such as, "Ask your child to show you how they used their bodies to measure the classroom," or "Have your child tell you about a character who solved a problem by sharing." Each clue was translated into the family's native language.

The practice supported student outcomes by encouraging children to recall, explain, and reflect on their learning experiences at home. These conversations strengthened oral language development, built vocabulary, and supported comprehension skills as students practiced retelling events and explaining their thinking. The routine also increased student confidence because children became the "expert" when sharing their learning with family members. In addition, Lew's Clues created consistent, low-pressure communication between home and school. Families gained a meaningful window into classroom learning, which helped build stronger relationships with the teacher.

The impact of Lew's Clues was evaluated informally through family feedback, student engagement, and the consistency of home-school communication throughout the year. Families frequently responded to clues, shared stories about conversations at home, and expressed appreciation for having a meaningful way to connect with their child's learning. Increased student enthusiasm and confidence when discussing classroom experiences also demonstrated the practice's positive effect. One challenge during implementation was maintaining consistency during especially busy school weeks while ensuring each clue remained thoughtful and connected to learning. Another challenge involved making communication accessible for all families, which was addressed through translation features in the TalkingPoints app. In the future, the practice could be evaluated more formally through family surveys, communication participation data, and reflection on student language and engagement growth over time.

Educators interested in replicating Lew's Clues should begin with simple, consistent communication that feels manageable and authentic. Short, specific prompts were often the most effective in sparking meaningful conversations at home. Prioritizing accessibility through translation tools, such as the TalkingPoints app, also helped ensure all families could participate.

ACCESS Celebration

Olander Elementary School, Poudre School District

Submitted by Marcela Santamaria Guzman, msguzman@psdschools.org

Multilingual students deserve recognition for the extra effort they put into completing additional assessments throughout the year. Beyond their regular classroom work, they are often required to take multiple language-proficiency tests that their peers do not, such as the ACCESS test. This creates a hidden testing load that frequently goes unnoticed. Acknowledging this extra burden is important to validate their hard work and to ensure that educators and families understand the dedication these students show every day.

The Assistant Principal (AP) at Olander Elementary School introduced the idea of recognizing the hard work of multilingual learners, and the English Language Development (ELD) teacher organized the event with support from the Family Liaison, who helped with communication and brought food. During the celebration, the AP spoke about the importance of testing and explained how the ACCESS assessment worked. Families and students attended, and several grade-level teachers stopped by to congratulate the students and show their support.

From the first day of testing, the school's AP announced that there would be a celebration to honor their commitment and hard work. Families were invited and encouraged to share some of their favorite sweets, and the ELD teacher created a flyer that was sent home in English and Spanish. During lunch, the school hosted a small celebration for all ACCESS test-takers, and students felt proud, important, and recognized for accomplishing something not everyone was asked to do—demonstrating academic skills in more than one language.

Students and families were proud of their achievement and recognized for their hard work during ACCESS testing. Students expressed feeling important, confident, and valued as multilingual learners, while families appreciated being included and seeing the school honor their children's bilingual strengths. For next steps, staff hope to expand schoolwide recognition with items like special T-shirts, 'Ask me about ACCESS' badges, or stickers worn during testing week so the whole school could acknowledge their effort. They also plan to increase family participation by scheduling the event at a more convenient time and improving visibility through morning announcements or a feature on the school website.

For schools or districts looking to conduct a similar celebration, the Family Liaison and ELD teacher recommend ensuring that parents clearly understand what ACCESS testing is and how they can help their children prepare for testing week. It is important that families recognize the value of the assessment and encourage students to put in their best effort. School administration also need to be involved in this process to reinforce the importance of ACCESS for the school. Finally, receiving feedback from administration is helpful for evaluating and improving the approach.



Beyond the Bell: Discovery@Night

Discovery High School, Widefield School District 3

Submitted by Dr. Albert Wiggins, wigginsalbert@wsd3.org

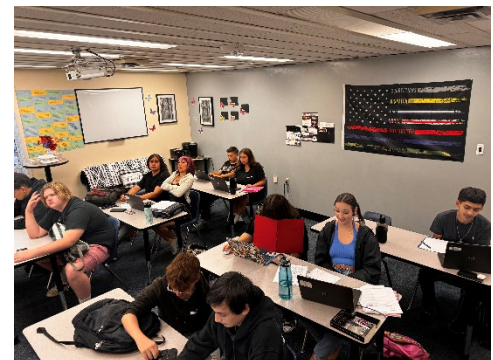
Discovery High School (DHS), part of Widefield School District 3 (WSD3), believes that student success is strengthened when schools partner with families to remove barriers to learning. To increase graduation opportunities and provide greater flexibility for students, DHS created Discovery@Night, an evening program that supported both credit recovery and credit advancement. The program was designed to meet the needs of students whose schedules, work responsibilities, family obligations, or previous educational experiences made success in a traditional school setting more challenging.

The program was developed through collaboration among school administrators, counselors, teachers, students, and families. Counselors and administrators worked closely with students and parents to identify academic needs, develop individualized graduation plans, and recommend courses that support each student's goals. Families were encouraged to participate in conversations about scheduling, academic progress, and graduation planning.

During its first year, students earned a combined total of 13 credits, demonstrating the need for additional learning opportunities. Building on that success, the second-year goal was to double the number of credits earned, and students exceeded expectations by earning 24 credits. During the most recent school year, students earned an impressive 56 credits through the program. Students enrolled in courses such as American Sign Language (ASL), Parenting, and Healthy Relationships, allowing them to earn graduation credits while developing practical life skills. Flexible scheduling allowed students to balance school with employment, family responsibilities, athletics, or other commitments, making it easier for families to support consistent attendance and academic progress.

One of the program's greatest strengths was its ability to reconnect students and families who became disengaged from school. Students who had previously dropped out or were at risk of not graduating returned to complete their graduation requirements. Teachers worked closely with students to provide individualized instruction, while counselors maintained regular communication with families to celebrate progress and address challenges.

The effectiveness of Discovery@Night was measured through student enrollment, credits earned, graduation outcomes, and family feedback. The growth from 13 to 24 to 56 credits reflected both the program's demand and its positive impact on student success. Moving forward, DHS plans to gather more formal feedback from students and families to evaluate how the program continues to strengthen family engagement and improve graduation outcomes.



For schools interested in replicating this practice, begin by recognizing that flexibility is most effective when families are active partners in the educational process. Frequent communication, individualized planning, and a shared commitment to student success create opportunities for students who might otherwise fall behind. As one parent shared, "Discovery@Night gave our family hope and provided a path for our child to earn a diploma."

Cafecito Con Matemáticas

Bella Romero Academy, Greeley-Evans School District 6

Submitted by Eboney Duran, eduran8@greeleyschools.org

Bella Romero Academy's partnership with the University of Northern Colorado was developed to strengthen family engagement in mathematics through a bilingual Math Night designed to celebrate learning, culture, and language. Serving a diverse K–8 student population in Greeley-Evans School District 6, Bella Romero Academy prioritized family-centered learning opportunities that supported academic growth, particularly in mathematics. The goal of the practice was to increase student enthusiasm for math while equipping families with accessible, enjoyable strategies they could use at home to support classroom learning.

Planning and implementation involved school leadership, classroom teachers, family engagement staff, and faculty and students from the University of Northern Colorado. University partners collaborated with school staff to design developmentally appropriate, hands-on math activities that reflected grade-level concepts and family participation. Bilingual support staff ensured that all communication and activity materials were available in both English and Spanish.

The Math Night practice, organized in the Cafecitos model, created a welcoming environment where mathematics became a shared family experience. Families rotated through stations featuring interactive games, problem-solving challenges, and hands-on activities designed for students and caregivers to complete together. Students demonstrated increased confidence as they explained strategies, modeled thinking, and engaged in mathematical conversations with family members. This strengthened academic vocabulary, problem-solving persistence, and positive attitudes toward mathematics. Incentives such as prizes and take-home learning kits gave families practical tools to continue practicing concepts at home. Through the partnership with the university, the school also strengthened ties to a trusted community institution.



The practice was evaluated through family attendance, participation rates at each station, informal feedback conversations, and follow-up reflections from teachers and university partners. Staff also reviewed whether students referenced activities during later classroom instruction and whether families used take-home materials. A future improvement plan included distributing short bilingual surveys to families to better measure confidence in supporting math at home and student interest in mathematics after the event. The primary challenge during implementation was coordinating schedules across school staff, university partners, and family availability, while also ensuring enough bilingual materials and volunteers were prepared for strong attendance.

For schools hoping to replicate this practice, the most important advice is to center joy, accessibility, and authentic family partnership. Activities need to be simple, hands-on, and designed for adults and children to solve together. Strong community partnerships and bilingual communication are essential to success.

Club de Lectura

Poudre School District

Submitted by María Elena Thomas, mariat@psdschools.org

Using literature as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue, Club de Lectura (Book Study) in Poudre School District (PSD) fostered lifelong learning and community. By providing a platform for shared storytelling, the district empowered the family support systems surrounding students. In a district valued for cultural diversity, Club de Lectura served as a vital bridge, transforming reading into a collective experience of belonging.

Three Family Liaisons representing eight PSD schools collaborated to lead a cohort of 17 parents. They strategically selected three personally and pedagogically meaningful books: *Estaba Preparado Para Todo Menos Para Ti* (a memoir used to build vulnerability and resilience); *Como Agua Para Chocolate* (a culinary-based narrative where parents contributed personal recipes and shared food); and *Esperanza Renace* (a 5th-grade curriculum staple that allowed parents to identify with culturally relevant themes while practicing academic analysis).



Participants met for six two-hour sessions bi-weekly. For each session, they had an assigned section of the book. At the end of the six sessions, the entire book was discussed with reading strategies in mind. This "Parent Literacy Lab" explicitly modeled reading strategies to create a "co-teacher" dynamic at home. Parents learned to deconstruct language in ways that mirrored PSD classroom instruction: personal connections, contextual vocabulary, literary elements, and historical perspectives. By using these techniques, parents transitioned from homework monitors to literacy mentors. This shift ensured higher-order thinking skills were reinforced with students at home, creating a seamless transition between the classroom and the living room.

PSD utilized a mixed-methods evaluation to document success. Through qualitative observation, they captured the "Aha!" moments and deep emotional resonance during discussions. This was paired with summative questionnaires at the program's conclusion. These provided "Parent Voice Data," allowing participants to formalize how the club improved their confidence in supporting their children's literacy and strengthened their relationship with the school district. In addition to these intended outcomes, there were several unexpected outcomes. Participants bonded with each other and became friends outside of the reading club. Several parents reported that they had never read a book before and that the books provided were the first in their personal home library. One parent reported that she shared her book with her physician, who proceeded to share it with all her patients.

To replicate this success, PSD recommended four pillars: unified collaboration to turn a school project into a district movement; choosing books with emotional depth and practical connections; providing food to develop trust and create a safe space; and explicitly teaching "teacher moves" to give parents the keys to their children's academic success.

Destination Graduation

Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Susan Kimes-Demboski, susan.kimes-demboski@jeffco.k12.co.us

Motivated by the district's aim to close opportunity gaps, Jeffco Public Schools' Destination Graduation initiative was designed to strengthen authentic academic partnerships. This opportunity prioritized helping all families understand grade-level expectations, curriculum standards, and how educators and families could partner together to improve academic outcomes and strengthen belonging for every student.

Planning and implementing this comprehensive initiative was centered on family voice first. Before mapping out the program, the district hosted a series of listening sessions to learn directly from families about which they truly wanted to learn more. With those crucial insights guiding the way, bringing the initiative to life required dedicated collaboration across multiple district departments. Key contributors involved in the planning included the Department of Federal Programs/Family and Community Partnerships Division, district educators, and subject matter experts.

Destination Graduation operated as a comprehensive series of milestone transition events specifically designed for families of students entering Kindergarten, Middle School, and High School. During these targeted sessions, educators provided families with practical toolkits, travel guides, and actionable guidance to support their child's developmental and academic journey. Families were familiarized with platforms like the Infinite Campus Parent Portal and Student Insights to successfully monitor academic progress. Families also learned about critical milestones, such as early literacy foundations in kindergarten and the importance of credit accumulation and time management beginning in ninth grade.

The initiative placed a heavy emphasis on emotional well-being and a positive school climate, teaching families that belonging was the necessary foundation that had to come before academic achievement. By giving families the resources to build learning habits and maintain communication with school counselors, the practice successfully integrated parents into the school improvement process, shifting their roles from simple problem solvers to collaborative academic coaches as their children grew.

The practice was evaluated following each transition event using a specific "Destination Graduation Feedback 2026" survey, accessed via a QR code provided at the end of the presentation. Feedback from families was positive. One attendee shared that they appreciated the resources and specific scripts provided to talk with their student about self-advocacy, as well as the general guidance on transitioning their role as a parent. During implementation, planners had to navigate several logistical challenges, including coordinating subject matter expert walkthroughs, managing RSVPs, organizing childcare, and ensuring that families received translated materials.

For any districts looking to replicate this model, the strategy was simple: it began with listening. Instead of guessing what families needed, planners invited them to the table first and allowed their feedback to guide the blueprint. The true value was realized when a program like this was treated as a launchpad for ongoing, long-term academic partnerships that kept families connected and supported all year round.



Drawing the Lines: A Backwards-Planned FSCP Implementation

Hanover School District 28

Submitted by Lori Underwood, lunderwood@hanoverhornets.org

Hanover School District's Family, School, and Community Partnership (FSCP) practice was grounded in a clear strategic purpose: ensuring every student had the ability to attend school each and every day. Rooted in the district's Student-Centered Accountability Program (S-CAP), the work reflected three priorities — a coherent district-wide vision for instruction, a positive and inclusive environment supporting the whole child, and genuine two-way communication with all stakeholders. Chronic absenteeism stood at 46.2%, making meaningful family and community partnership not optional, but essential.



Planning and implementation involved a cross-role District Implementation Team including the superintendent, communications director, and both building principals. At the school level, family advocates, counselors, administrative assistants, and teachers carried actions forward. Community partners — including the District Accountability Committee (DAC), Park Board, Hanover Church, the Fire Department, and local food pantries — also played active roles throughout the year.

The 2025–2026 FSCP implementation plan was organized around [six research-based leadership strategies](#): aligning program and policy, creating awareness, guiding learning and program development, sharing knowledge, celebrating milestones, and documenting progress and evaluating outcomes. Actions were mapped backwards from existing district work to four SMART goals targeting daily attendance, community and family engagement, student achievement, and staff morale and culture.

At the district level, a weekly family newsletter kept families consistently informed, DAC meetings ran monthly, and board meetings were livestreamed with captions to ensure transparency and access. Seasonal community events — including a Back-to-School Ice Cream Social, Halloween Trunk or Treat, Thanksgiving meals for families, and a Winter Holiday Celebration — reduced barriers to engagement and built genuine trust between families and the school. The Angel Tree, Toys for Tots, and coat drives addressed basic needs, directly reducing environmental barriers to attendance.

At the building level, Hanover Elementary achieved 100% attendance on October Count Day through targeted incentive campaigns, awards assemblies, after-school programs, field trips, and professional development in ELA, Math, and i-Ready. The Junior/Senior High launched an attendance challenge, reintroduced National Honor Society, hosted guest speakers, and delivered a full calendar of spirit events and student showcases. Professional learning communities met weekly at both buildings, strengthening instructional practices and reinforcing the connection between engaged staff, engaged families, and students who show up.

The implementation plan built evaluation into its structure through documented action steps, status tracking, measurement alignment to SMART goals, and a "Keep, Stop, Start" reflection column for each activity informing 2026–2027 planning. Attendance data served as a primary metric, with October Count results (100% at HES, 98% at JSHS) offering a concrete early indicator. Field notes captured real-time observations,

such as positive family feedback on the newsletter and turnout data from community events. Challenges included uncertainty around chronic absenteeism legislation, incomplete data collection in several action steps, and the FSCP team remaining small — growing from one to two members over the course of the year.

Hanover’s advice is to start by looking honestly at what is already happening before building anything new. The connections were already there; the district just had not drawn the lines yet. Backwards planning from existing actions to goals served as a powerful first step, and the [P-12 FSCP Framework](#) itself was worth adopting, proving that districts can adopt it, adapt it, and pass it forward.



Ensuring Every Student Leaves with Their WINGS

The Falcon Zone, District 49

Submitted by Cari Muresan, carolyn.muresan@d49.org

The goal of WINGS was to clearly and intentionally develop the skills and dispositions every student needs for success beyond graduation. The Falcon Zone in D49 recognized there was not an aligned set of traits in the K–12 system to clearly identify shared goals for students and so they developed their Portrait of a Graduate framework to focus on WINGS. WINGS represents Wisdom, Integrity, Networking, Grit, and Self-Confidence—core traits embedded across the Falcon Zone to guide learning experiences and prepare students for their future.



The Portrait of a Graduate was designed collaboratively by a steering committee, teachers, and K–12 students working in small groups, undergoing many iterations of both the design and acronym. Family feedback and input was sought during implementation through school-level School Accountability Committee (SAC) and PTA meetings. Implementation was led by the zone superintendent and supported by administrators, teachers, and staff.

WINGS became the foundation for both academic and behavioral expectations across all seven Falcon Zone schools and was fully embedded within each school's PBIS system. At the elementary level, teachers incorporated WINGS into daily instruction. Schools hosted assemblies to celebrate students who exemplified WINGS traits. At the secondary level, WINGS was highlighted through "WINGS Wednesday" Senior Spotlights. WINGS was also communicated through zone-level newsletters, community messaging, and visible branding. In addition, community members and partners who support Falcon Zone schools were intentionally recognized by presenting them with a WINGS certificate and thanking them for helping Falcon Zone students "earn their WINGS."

The practice was evaluated through ongoing observation of student and staff use of WINGS language and its integration into classrooms. The framework was organically woven into school and zone newsletters, Facebook posts, school assemblies, student recognition programs, and community celebrations. This continual integration into everyday practices and communications demonstrated that WINGS is a part of the Falcon Zone's culture rather than a standalone initiative.

To successfully replicate this practice, districts should begin by building a representative committee that includes students from across grades K–12 to ensure the framework reflects the voices of those it is intended to serve. Keeping the design simple, memorable, and meaningful is essential. Before launching the practice, districts should intentionally seek feedback from family leadership groups, such as School Accountability Committees (SACs) and PTAs, so families understand the purpose of the framework and feel invested in its success. Leaders should then embed the language into daily routines, instruction, celebrations, and recognition systems, while also incorporating it into communications with families so students experience consistency between school and home. Strong visuals, consistent branding, and regular reinforcement through newsletters, social media, assemblies, and community events help make the framework visible and recognizable.

Family Learning Series

Edgewater Elementary School, Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Ana Contreras, acontrer@jeffcoschools.us

The Family Learning Series at Edgewater Elementary School was a three-part engagement initiative designed to provide families with practical tools to support student success. The series included sessions held in November 2025, February 2026, and April 2026, and was facilitated in collaboration with the Family Liaison, the Family Ambassador of Jeffco Schools, and Jefferson County Public Libraries. Each session focused on equipping families at Edgewater Elementary School with resources, strategies, and opportunities to connect with one another in a welcoming and supportive environment.

The November 2025 session introduced families to a variety of local community resources and support services. Families learned about library programs, literacy supports, after-school opportunities, and accessible services that promoted academic growth and family well-being. The session also created space for families to share experiences, ask questions, and begin building stronger relationships with school staff and fellow parents.

The February 2026 session focused on social-emotional learning and family wellness. Participants explored strategies for supporting children's emotional regulation, communication skills, and resilience at home and at school. Facilitators provided practical tools for creating positive routines, strengthening family connections, and helping children navigate challenges with confidence. Interactive activities encouraged reflection, discussion, and peer learning among participating families.

The April 2026 session centered on bilingualism and strategies to support children's language development. Families engaged in conversations about the benefits of maintaining and strengthening both home and school languages, encouraging reading and communication in multiple languages, and creating language-rich environments at home. Caregivers also received guidance on supporting children's confidence in using both languages, promoting cultural identity, and building effective communication with teachers and school staff.



Across all three sessions, families participated in meaningful learning experiences that strengthened their confidence and capacity to support their children's growth. The series fostered a sense of belonging and community among families while increasing awareness of available resources and support. Through collaboration, discussion, and hands-on learning opportunities, families built stronger connections with one another, with school staff, and with community partners.



Family Literacy Lab

Cimarron Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Erika Talamantes, etalamantescanales@cherrycreekschools.org

The goal of the Family Literacy Lab at Cimarron Elementary School was to help strengthen the connection between families and what's happening in the classroom by creating a fun, interactive literacy experience where parents could be directly involved in their child's learning.



This event was planned through collaboration between the kindergarten teacher and the Educator Community Liaison. They drew inspiration from literacy expert Nawal Qarooni, who focuses on meaningful ways to involve families in learning. Together, they communicated with families, organized the event, and made sure the activities were simple, engaging, and accessible for everyone.

The Family Literacy Lab took place during the school day, and families were invited to join their children in the classroom. Parents and siblings participated in interactive reading activities alongside the students.

The goal was to show families what literacy instruction looks like in kindergarten and give them practical strategies they could use at home. It also helped boost student confidence and excitement around reading, while making families feel more connected and included in the classroom community.

The planning lead evaluated this practice through the number of parents who participated, feedback from families, and teacher observations. Overall, families really appreciated the opportunity to be involved and shared that they felt more confident supporting reading at home. One challenge was scheduling, since it could be hard to find a time that worked for everyone. Another challenge was making sure families clearly understood the purpose of the event. Even so, participation and engagement were strong.

To replicate the Family Literacy Lab, the organizers recommend focusing on clear communication and keeping things flexible. Personally inviting families and making it clear that everyone was welcome—including siblings—helped increase attendance. It was also important to keep activities simple and easy to repeat at home. One parent shared, “I loved seeing how my child learns and how I can help at home,” which really captures the impact of the experience. Creating a welcoming environment made a big difference, and even small efforts to connect with families could have a lasting effect.



Family Literacy Night

O'Dea Elementary School, Poudre School District

Submitted by Jessica Gardner, jgardner@psdschools.org

To connect families with library staff and to give parents ideas and information on how to keep students reading during the summer, O'Dea Elementary School hosted Family Literacy Night at the local library. In addition to supporting literacy once school was out, this event was an opportunity for school staff to meet and get to know families outside of the school building.

The family liaison worked with the principal, counselors, and English Language Development (ELD) teachers to invite library staff from the community to present on the resources available to help kids continue reading throughout the summertime. A library expert helped the families discover hidden gems in local branches, shared easy ways to make reading a part of their summer routine, and introduced them to the best family-friendly events happening in the community.



The night started off with an introduction of the school and library staff in attendance. Families were provided with a list of summer resources on mental health support, food resources, and contacts in the district that families could reach out to during the summer months. The library staff then provided numerous handouts informing families of all the summer programs they offered to help keep children reading when school was out. They also helped families get library cards on the spot. Attendees also received a meal to help make the event accessible and helpful to the whole family. Every family left with a set of literacy activities, as well as small take-home gifts to help promote literacy over the summer.

One way Family Literacy Night was evaluated was by library card sign-ups; every family that attended walked away with a card they could immediately use. A challenge was getting families to see the importance of attending an event like Family Literacy Night, and the benefits that it had for their child's education and learning.

Personal invitations were found to be a key to the event's success. Providing families with tangible resources to take home, such as library cards, was also highly important. Additionally, offering a meal for the attendees proved to be an excellent strategy.



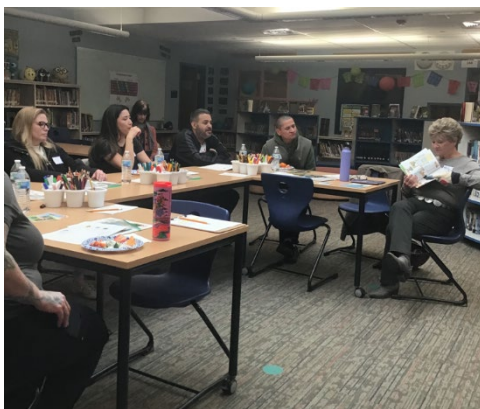
Learning Literacy Together

Partner Elementary Schools, Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Susie Kirvin, skirvin@jeffcoschools.us

Learning Literacy Together (LLT) was a three-part literacy series for Jeffco Title I funded kindergarten families. The series was designed to provide kindergarten families with information about the Jeffco kindergarten curriculum, teach academic language used in schools, and provide take-home academic activities that families could use with their children. Participating schools included South Lakewood Elementary School, Welchester Elementary School, Slater Elementary School, Swanson Elementary School, Little Elementary School, Secrest Elementary School, Foothills Elementary School, Lawrence Elementary School, Rose Stein International Elementary School, and Westgate Elementary School.

The Jeffco Public Schools Department of Federal Programs Title I team, along with a retired Jeffco kindergarten teacher, created the three-part series. Family engagement liaisons from 10 Title I funded schools participated and were important to the success of LLT. They worked hard to ensure families had a terrific experience by planning logistics for each class, contacting families to explain the series, following up with additional take-home academic activities, and providing feedback to the Title I team.



Learning Literacy Together was centered on demystifying the core literacy skills kindergarten students learn in the classroom. Families learned what was being taught and what skills kindergarten students needed to master by the end of the school year. The first session centered on vocabulary development by stressing that it was an important beginning reading skill. The second session focused on core reading skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling. The final class demonstrated effective strategies for reading fiction and non-fiction books, sight word practice, and offered a brief explanation of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) testing.

LLT was specifically designed to be an accessible and engaging learning opportunity for families. Since the curriculum introduced new academic concepts, the program ensured that participants learned essential vocabulary while engaging in practical, take-home academic activities that families could use with their kindergarteners. Each session included dedicated time for families to practice the activities and ask questions.

Each LLT session was evaluated using a post-session paper survey to gather family feedback, which subsequently informed revisions to the session content and clarity. A central challenge involved maintaining an appropriate balance between introducing essential academic concepts, such as phonemic awareness and Consonant-Vowel-Consonant (CVC) words, and specialized terminology used in schools. These surveys were instrumental in guiding the team to make changes.

To successfully replicate this series, the team noted that this was new learning for the families and required balancing academic language with engaging and enjoyable take-home activities. Presenters quickly fostered a sense of belonging by establishing a relaxed, respectful atmosphere where all questions and voices were encouraged, maximizing family participation.

Middle School Girls Support Group: Fostering Belonging and Attendance with Families

Everitt Middle School, Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Beatriz Monsalve, beatriz.monsalve@jeffco.k12.co.us

At Everitt Middle School, some multilingual students faced language barriers and cultural changes that made them feel isolated, leading to school avoidance. The main goal of the Girls Support Group was to help newcomer, Spanish-speaking female students feel a sense of belonging and improve their school attendance.

This program succeeded because of a wonderful team effort between the school and community partners. From the Jefferson Center for Mental Health (JCMH), bilingual and bicultural professionals led the social-emotional sessions. School counselors, along with the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education (CLDE) teacher, connected the sessions to student needs. The Assistant Principal monitored attendance data, while the Family Engagement Liaison and Family Ambassadors built strong relationships with parents, ensuring families were treated as true partners.

The Girls Group met for six sessions, starting with three joint sessions for parents and students, followed by three student-only sessions. Family sessions focused on using the Parent Portal, finding English learning resources, and supporting emotional wellness at home. Student sessions explored cultural identity ("Roots and Identity"), self-expression ("My Voice, My Strength"), and finding safe people ("Trust Matters"). The JCMH bilingual and bicultural professionals led one joint session and all student sessions. For other sessions, a school interpreter assisted so every parent could participate fully.



To evaluate the program, the team tracked attendance numbers and gathered family feedback. The results were heartening: one student's attendance rose from 21% the previous year to 84% by the end of the school year, and another student's attendance grew from 52% to 84%. The girls stopped avoiding school and began asking counselors and teachers for support, while parents started a WhatsApp group to help one another. To overcome initial trust and language barriers, the English-speaking counselors and the family liaison consistently used the Language Line interpretation service and the Talking Points app for all home communication, making connection a regular staff habit.

For schools wanting to replicate this, the best advice was to focus on trust and belonging rather than punishment for absences, blending family outreach with mental health support from the start. The team reflected that while attendance percentages remained a work in progress, the most significant impact had been the increase in the students' sense of belonging, which naturally restored their desire to attend school. At the end of the sessions, a parent expressed gratitude for the support, noting that they saw more confidence in their daughter, who then wanted to go to school and felt more connected with other girls, meaning it was no longer a struggle to get her to attend.

Moose Threads

Alamosa High School, Alamosa School District

Submitted by Genesis Escalon, gescalon@alamosaschools.org

At Alamosa High School, the goal of Moose Threads was to ensure that all students had access to essential items—such as clothing, shoes, and hygiene products—so that unmet basic needs did not interfere with full participation in school life. The program also promoted student engagement by inviting student volunteers to help organize, manage, and maintain the inventory. This structure fostered a sense of responsibility, community, and empathy while empowering students to contribute directly to the well-being of their peers.

The Counseling Administrative Assistant founded Moose Threads after noticing that students lacked clothing and basic necessities. The program grew schoolwide, with teachers, students, and community members contributing donations. Throughout the school year, students discreetly accessed clothing and essential items, ensuring they received support while maintaining their dignity and privacy.

The Moose Threads program operated primarily through donations from other students and community members. These resources were collected via social media outreach, school-wide drives, and organized efforts within the school. This approach not only provided essential resources to students in need but also encouraged a culture of giving within the school community. When school staff became aware that a student lacked basic necessities, they quickly and discreetly connected them with Moose Threads.



Beyond meeting immediate needs, Moose Threads played a significant role in reinforcing a positive school climate, as students witnessed the care and investment of both their peers and the wider community. By involving students in donation drives and awareness campaigns, the program encouraged empathy, leadership, and social responsibility. Community engagement further amplified the program's impact, demonstrating to students that their well-being mattered not only to school staff but also to the community at large. This collaborative model helped cultivate a supportive environment where students felt valued, connected, and empowered.

Moose Threads was evaluated primarily through ongoing student feedback, which provided valuable insights into how well the practice met students' needs and kept them engaged. This feedback was gathered through surveys, informal conversations, and focus groups, allowing staff to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and any unintended consequences. In addition, student input, participation rates, and engagement levels were monitored to gauge overall impact. Challenges during implementation included ensuring consistent student involvement, addressing varied technological skills, and aligning content with diverse interests. To strengthen evaluation in the future, the planning team has decided to incorporate structured assessment tools, regular data analysis, and staff reflection sessions to measure outcomes more systematically.

Keeping the process simple and flexible was key, allowing the program to grow alongside the students. Patience was essential, as progress took time. Ultimately, the priority was to maintain a respectful, judgment-free environment where students felt safe and comfortable accessing support whenever they needed it.

STEM Night: Schools, Families, Community, SCIENCE!

Foothills Elementary School, Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Katy Evans, katy.evans@jeffco.k12.co.us

Foothills Elementary School is a Title I-funded school located in a region with many STEM industries including renewable energy, medicine, aerospace technology, and higher education. Research indicated that students in Title I schools often received reduced science instruction as schools prioritized reading and mathematics achievement. As a result, students from lower-income families had fewer opportunities to engage in STEM learning and were less likely to pursue STEM-related careers. The school developed a STEM Night Science Fair to connect students and families with these fields.

STEM Night was structured around three components: student-led science projects, hands-on family learning activities, and interactive career exploration tables. This design supported multiple entry points for participation, ensuring the event was welcoming to all families regardless of prior experience with science. All students received classroom instruction on the scientific method along with exposure to developmentally appropriate project examples. Families were provided with resources, including videos and project ideas, to support learning at home. Donated funds were used to supply tri-fold boards for all interested students and to provide experiment materials for families needing financial support.

Students and families worked together to design and complete projects at home. More than 50 students participated, with projects ranging from homemade lotions to camouflage investigations, chemical reactions, and edible crystal formations. Most projects did not come from the idea lists the school provided, demonstrating both the creativity of families and the value of honoring their knowledge.



Professionals from local STEM industries and organizations contributed real-world, interactive experiences. Engineers, scientists, geologists, and planners facilitated hands-on demonstrations including an interactive flood demonstration, glowing gases and light spectra, fluid sand, mammoth bones, and mice Mars rovers. Outreach teams from the University of Colorado and the Colorado School of Mines led engaging student activities such as engineering parachutes, exploring chemical reactions, and extracting DNA.

The event brought together more than 200 attendees. Anecdotal feedback indicated that the collective effort and engagement made the night a success.

Foothills planned to continue this event in the future. One adjustment they plan to make in the future is to align the in-class scientific method instruction with specific grade-level curriculum rather than just aligning it at an age-appropriate level. If other schools are interested in expanding their science fairs or STEM nights, they could reach out to local universities, which often have outreach programs ready to go.



Educational Liaison Role and Regional Collaboration to Support Highly Mobile Youth

Poudre School District and Thompson School District

Submitted by Jacqui Walz, jacqui@thematthewshouse.org

The Landing, a youth shelter in Loveland serving youth experiencing homelessness ages 15–21, opened in January of 2025. The Landing was operated by The Matthews House in partnership with Thompson School District, which donated the building. The Landing provided a “Safe Space to Land” for youth experiencing homelessness in Northern Colorado. As the Matthews House vision for The Landing developed, the need for an Educational Liaison (EL) role was identified to bridge the gap between school districts and the shelter. Poudre School District then partnered with The Matthews House to provide staffing for the EL role in the first year. The EL role was not built on an existing model, as the full scope was not yet known at the time of opening.

In the first few months of opening, The Landing was widely unknown to the community, so the EL role required a dedicated focus on outreach, education, and networking in the region. This included identifying and reaching out to district McKinney-Vento Liaisons; identifying and partnering with community organizations, community colleges, and Colorado State University’s Fostering Success Program (FSP); and presenting to district mental health and counseling teams. The role evolved into building and maintaining a regional network of district partners.

The EL was an experienced, licensed educator embedded in the shelter who supported youth with McKinney-Vento transportation coordination, worked with district staff to remove barriers and ensure protections were in place, and worked with Landing Case Managers and shelter staff to support the continuation of education, re-engagement, and graduation. The EL also maintained current knowledge of education options including traditional, online, GED/High School Equivalency, and workforce and post-secondary pathways within the region. Another function of the EL within the shelter was education, professional development, and the translation of educational systems for shelter staff.

The EL connected and re-connected youth to information, services, and supports across districts so that support followed the student rather than remained siloed. Recognizing that circumstances changed quickly, the EL was responsive and worked across both academic and shelter hours. Shared problem-solving with district teams created a coordinated response. The EL provided consistent advocacy, working with shelter staff and district partners to build trust so participants remained engaged in education despite instability and uncertainty.

Following implementation, the impact was measurable: 56 youth were served across multiple districts, eight had graduated (2025), six were anticipated graduates (2026), 18 youth had maintained continuation of enrollment, and six had engaged in post-secondary



education. A significant challenge was limited funding. This restricted the number of positions that were available, reduced competitive compensation rates, and led to challenges in recruiting and maintaining qualified staff. Other challenges included misalignment with school district policies and procedures for referrals and outreach. Inconsistent staffing and fluctuating schedules could cause lower rates of participation and reduce the effectiveness of re-engagement efforts. Another challenge was the misalignment of administrative policies between traditional education and what was needed for highly mobile youth (HMY).

Securing sustainable funding from the outset was essential to ensure the role was maintained. When positions like that were reduced or eliminated, the systems and supports built were disrupted. Consistency in the role was critical to provide the stable support HMY had historically lacked. One McKinney-Vento Liaison and Mental Health Coordinator from a partner district shared: “What truly stands out is the care [the EL] takes in supporting students through transitions, especially in the space between discharge and what comes next. [The EL] helps create continuity, stability, and hope.”



English Language Development for Parents

Poudre School District

Submitted by María Elena Thomas, mariat@psdschools.org

Poudre School District's (PSD) strategic plan emphasized Literacy for All and Family Partnership. The English Language Development (ELD) for Parents program addressed a core challenge to these goals: the language gap. The intention of the daily ELD for Parents classes was to build the linguistic capacity of parents to navigate the school system independently and advocate for their children's academic and social-emotional needs. PSD recognized that when a parent's English proficiency increased, their student's attendance and academic engagement typically followed.

The Family Liaison collaborated with school administrators and volunteers from a local church to transition off-site ELD classes into the school building. The district provided logistical and fiscal support, while seasoned volunteers delivered instruction.



Literacy
Mental Health & Belonging
Graduate With Options

The practice consisted of daily ELD for Parents sessions. By partnering with a local community organization of retired and "seasoned" educators, the school provided professional-level instruction within a welcoming, familiar environment. The program was hosted directly on school grounds during morning hours, supplemented by a hospitality component (coffee and tea) to foster social-emotional connections among participants.

As parents' English proficiency improved, they became better equipped to support literacy at home, growing more confident in reading with their children and monitoring homework assignments. Their improved language skills allowed parents to participate more meaningfully in parent-teacher conferences and IEP meetings. Students seeing their parents attend "school" daily reinforced the value of education and persistence.

The presence of parents in the building every morning transformed the school into a more inclusive and "open-door" environment. By occupying school spaces daily, parents moved from being "outsiders" to being a core part of the school community. This daily practice created a sustainable pipeline of informed parents who were ready to volunteer, join school accountability committees, and advocate for school-wide improvements.

The initial phase of the ELD for Parents program used an "open-door" model to maximize accessibility and reduce entry barriers. While not formally evaluated, the practice was monitored through participation data, totaling an estimated 700 instructional hours. The primary challenge was a seasonal decline in attendance. It was difficult to determine if dwindling attendance was due to curriculum satisfaction or external factors, such as seasonal employment cycles. Moving forward, PSD plans to implement a quarterly registration system to foster a sense of commitment and allow for consistent data collection.

To replicate this partnership, it is necessary to prioritize a "soft entry" by creating a sense of belonging. A Family Liaison was utilized to bridge the school and community partners. Local volunteer talent was leveraged while classes were hosted on-site during school hours. This aligned the parents' schedules with their children's and built long-term institutional familiarity.

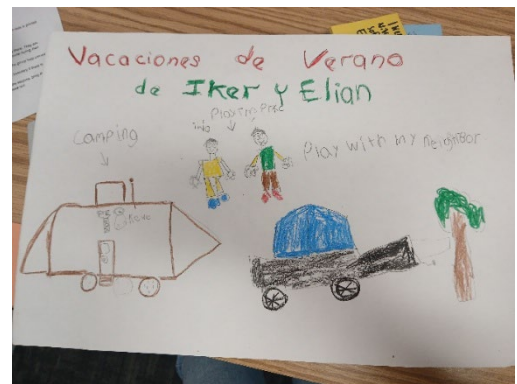
Familias en Comunidad

Sunrise Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Isabela Bernal, ibernal@cherrycreekschools.org

Familias en Comunidad at Sunrise Elementary School was a re-envisioning of the Voices of Color (VOC) meetings. Historically, VOC meetings had low participation despite their intention to center family voice and inclusion. Many Spanish-speaking families felt intimidated or unsure of the purpose of those meetings. In response, the Community Liaison created and personally invited families to Familias en Comunidad, a family engagement group designed for Spanish-speaking families of kindergarten and first-grade students. The purpose was to create a welcoming environment where families felt valued and comfortable participating in school life.

The first meeting was an informal discussion circle where families shared what their students talked about at home regarding school, what excited them most about their child's education, and concerns such as crosswalk safety, bullying, and playground supervision. The meeting was conducted primarily in Spanish. The principal attended using translation technology that translated Spanish to English in real time. This meant school leadership adapted to families rather than families adapting to the school.



Each meeting included refreshments. Additional meetings included a mini school tour where families visited classrooms during instruction time, allowing many parents to enter classrooms for the first time and observe their students' learning. Another workshop introduced families to the school mental health team and provided space for questions about student support and resources. The final meeting invited students, siblings, and parents to work together on “summer maps” highlighting family goals, traditions, and activities they hoped to do together over the summer. The year concluded with a celebration honoring both students and families. Families brought homemade food, students dressed up, and each child received a personalized certificate featuring a message from their teacher recognizing their growth and strengths.

Familias en Comunidad also used a WhatsApp group where families stayed connected with one another and the school community. School announcements were shared in Spanish through the app. Families asked questions, shared information, and supported one another directly. Over time, the group developed into a network of families answering each other's questions and helping one another navigate the school system.

Sunrise Elementary hopes to continue growing Familias en Comunidad into a more parent-led family leadership group. The vision is to create a space where families guide discussions, shape culturally relevant school initiatives, and build agency as leaders within the school.

For schools interested in replicating this practice, the organizers recommend focusing on creating spaces where families are trusted as leaders and partners. They suggested starting small, listening carefully, and allowing the group to evolve based on families' interests and strengths. As one parent shared, the program felt like a community, rather than just a meeting.



Pikes Peak FSCP Tiered Collaborative

Colorado Springs D11, District 49, Lewis-Palmer School District 38, and Widefield School District 3

Submitted by Jes Stroope, stroope_j@cde.state.co.us

The Pikes Peak FSCP Regional Collaborative launched in September 2023 with four actively engaged districts: Colorado Springs D11, District 49, Lewis-Palmer School District 38, and Widefield School District 3. Over the past few years, these districts have worked on completing the [FSCP Trail Map](#) at a district-level: Forming a Team, Following a Framework, Writing and Implementing a Plan, and Evaluating the Outcomes. No matter their starting point, each district has made steady progress since joining the Collaborative towards a systemic, structured approach to FSCP across their districts.

After three years of this progress, many staff across each of the four districts noted that they were struggling with bringing the work down to the school level with school administrators. After much discussion, the Collaborative put forth the idea of replicating the regional district collaborative model as exemplified by the CDE's Office of Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP), but for the schools within each of their districts. Thus, the Pikes Peak FSCP Tiered Collaborative was born.

Office of FSCP staff and Pikes Peak Regional Collaborative district leads co-planned the FSCP Tiered Collaborative. Each participating district invited at least one building leader and one teacher to join the FSCP Tiered Collaborative. In one virtual meeting, district and CDE staff agreed on two overall objectives for the Tiered Collaborative, session dates and times for the upcoming year, and session topics. The objectives were: 1) Building leaders will plan for implementing the FSCP Trail Map for Schools in their buildings, and 2) Building leaders and teachers will begin to align partnership strategies with student outcomes. Five sessions were scheduled for 2026-2027 and will cover the foundations of FSCP and history of the Collaborative model, writing and implementing a plan, high impact family engagement strategies, evaluating FSCP outcomes, and scaling up FSCP initiatives with the goal of sustainability. Throughout the year, school teams will select a family engagement practice or event to re-design and implement in Spring 2027.

To wrap up the first year of the Tiered Collaborative, participants will be invited to join their district teams at the Office of FSCP's Annual Retreat for District Leaders, where their re-designed practice or event will be shared and celebrated. CDE staff led the June Kick-Off and will lead the February session on scaling up. District staff will lead the other three sessions. Two sessions will be held virtually, while all other sessions will be in person. School building leaders and teachers will receive continuing education hours at the end of the year for their participation.

**JOIN THE
FSCP TIERED COLLABORATIVE**

Mission: CDE's Office of Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP) has partnered with your district in launching the Pikes Peak FSCP Tiered Collaborative. This is an opportunity for school leaders and teachers in neighboring districts to learn from one another while elevating and integrating high impact family engagement practices.

Why: Family engagement is critical for student success and school improvement. Effective FSCP is systemic, sustainable, and a strategy – not a goal or event.

Who: One building leader and one teacher from each participating school.

Launching:
June 2, 2026 – In-Person Kick-Off
10:00am–2:00pm (lunch provided)
Location TBD

2026–2027 Meeting Dates:
September 3, 2026 8:00am–11:00am
October 26, 2026 1:00pm–3:00pm (Zoom)
December 4, 2026 8:00am–11:00am
February 26, 2027 8:00am–10:00am (Zoom)
May 2027 – FSCP Annual Retreat

At the June Kick-Off, led by two Office of FSCP staff, six district team leads, six building leaders, and three teachers attended. CDE provided lunch. Participants completed a pre-survey that they will complete again in May 2027. Attendees were very engaged and talkative during the June session, indicating they valued family, school, and community partnerships and were excited to connect their engagement efforts with student outcomes.

To replicate this practice, reach out to the CDE’s Office of FSCP as partners in planning and implementing. Coordinate with your district neighbors on the best time of month and day to schedule sessions so that building and classroom coverage is not a hindrance to participation for school staff. Be clear on your objectives so that your planning stays focused and meaningful.

Family Engagement Team

Chappelow K-8 Arts Magnet School, Greeley-Evans School District 6

Submitted by Fatima Varela, jmadera3@greeleyschools.org

Guided by the Greeley-Evans School District 6 I-2030 Plan, staff at Chappelow K-8 Arts Magnet School aimed to strengthen relationships with families by establishing a Family Engagement Team. Rather than assuming the needs of families, the team prioritized active listening and open communication to build genuine partnerships that informed and created high-impact opportunities for student success.



**CHAPPELOW K-8
ARTS MAGNET SCHOOL**

To ensure this initiative was both inclusive and effective, the team was intentionally composed of diverse voices and professional roles. The team consisted of the parent and family advocate, one administrator, two teachers (elementary & middle school), two members of the mental health team, one classroom support staff member, and one office staff member.

Forming the Family Engagement Team began with the Parent and Family Advocate taking the initiative to present a formal vision to both the school administration and the entire staff. Building buy-in was a critical step, as it required recruiting members who were genuinely committed to the extra work of partnership. With the support of the District's Assistant Director of the Family Center & Cultural Excellence, the advocate utilized Professional Development (PD) presentations to recruit and align the team.

To model the "Listening First" approach, the team conducted empathy interviews across all grade levels to identify specific academic, social-emotional, and logistical needs. Families shared what they felt was most important for the school to do to help them support their children. These insights revealed that student success was tied to personalized communication and family confidence in navigating school technology, leading to the implementation of three strategies: Positive Contacts Home to build trust and celebrate student strengths; "Plug-In" Parent Support Sessions to provide hands-on tutorials for Infinite Campus and Schoology; and "Books with Dudes" literacy night to engage male role models in student learning. Together, these strategies transformed feedback into actionable partnership efforts.

Regarding implementation, the primary challenges centered on the foundational work required to establish the Family Engagement Team. Coordinating meeting times for a diverse group of eight staff members remained a logistical hurdle, but the team was solid and active. Moving forward, the next challenge lay in recruiting dedicated family members to join the core team and maintaining their long-term commitment to the ongoing planning and coordination of high-impact strategies.

For those looking to replicate this work, it is essential to create a space that represents and gives a voice to all families. Building a team like this requires patience and a genuine desire to understand the community's unique needs before jumping into planning.

Increasing School Accountability Committee Engagement through Monthly Coffee Talks

Axis International Academy, Charter School Institute

Submitted by Jessica Welch, jessicawelch@csi.state.co.us

Three years ago, AXIS International Academy was struggling to get consistent family engagement with its School Accountability Committee (SAC). The school decided to pilot monthly topic-driven Coffee Talks as an informal way to recruit and strengthen SAC participation. As monthly attendance at Coffee Talks increased, the school was able to increase engagement with the SAC as well. The SAC helped organize and run these monthly Coffee Talks as an opportunity to increase parent understanding of and engagement in academic topics.

Coffee Talks were monthly opportunities for parents to connect with school leadership in a casual, transparent, and collaborative setting. These gatherings served two purposes: to strengthen relationships among families, staff, and leadership, and to offer insight into the “inner workings” of the school.

Welcome!

Bienvenue!

Bienvenidos!

Huānyíng!



Each Coffee Talk started with informal networking as attendees received their coffee and were welcomed (10 minutes). This was followed by a presentation from the school administration on a key topic (25 minutes), and then the floor was opened for questions, clarifications, or suggestions (10 minutes). During the 2025–2026 school year, topics included parent engagement, unified improvement planning, multi-tiered systems of supports and academics, multi-tiered systems of supports and behavior, school finance, facilities updates, and what changes as students grow at AXIS. Finally, the Coffee Talk ended with classroom visits so parents could observe learning in

action (15 minutes). By including classroom visits, Coffee Talks created meaningful opportunities for parents to bridge the connection between school-level initiatives and classroom experiences. The school added a virtual attendance option that year and provided substitute coverage to at least one teacher each month to ensure staff participation.

The school evaluated the success of the Coffee Talks through survey feedback and by monitoring attendance. Since instituting the practice in 2023, average attendance increased from 13 people per meeting to over 40 in 2025–2026. The SAC and the school leader also solicited real-time feedback during the meetings using a combination of Post-it notes (for in-person attendees) and Padlet notes (for virtual attendees). The SAC solicited input from families on topics they wanted to hear about by including a QR code in the monthly school newsletter and by reviewing meeting feedback.

In the second year of hosting monthly coffee chats, the school experienced a challenge related to a small group of parents using the meetings to air grievances. Feedback from attendees reflected that the majority of parents were frustrated with this behavior. As a result, the school leader and the SAC collaboratively developed a set of meeting norms and expectations. One of the norms established was that the conversation had to stay focused on the topic at hand, and that discussions had to be productive and positive. However, school leaders provided an opportunity for parents to stay after the meeting to raise individual concerns one-on-one.

Schools as Community Hubs

Aurora Public Schools

Submitted by Silvia Montenegro, ssmontenegro@aurorak12.org

Through the Destination APS strategic plan, Aurora Public Schools (APS) launched a coordinated, all-district effort to establish a deeply rooted culture of Belonging, Safety, and Care across every school building. Recognizing that academic success is inextricably linked to emotional and physical well-being, this systemic effort served as a core pillar of the district's Schools as Community Hubs strategy.



By weaving together robust foundational frameworks, APS successfully shifted school climates from standard operational spaces to true community ecosystems. The success of the Schools as Community Hubs framework relied on the intentional blending of national research and local community voice. The Schools as Community Hubs strategy pulled from Colorado's P-12 Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP) Framework, Colorado Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (COMTSS), as well as the research of Dr. Karen Mapp and Dr. Joyce Epstein. When developing the strategy, the research was coupled with local community voices from the APS community.

To turn this district vision into localized action, every school within APS focused on building belonging through school-wide goals. Some schools focused on restorative practices, while others focused on embedding social-emotional learning or student mentorship structures. Schools actively integrated authentic student and family voices into systems and structures, transforming community members from passive consumers to active co-designers of school culture. Simultaneously, the district aligned its Family Liaison professional development directly to this focus. Family Liaisons were equipped with specialized skills centered on intentional, empathetic relationship-building, acting as the primary welcoming frontline for historically marginalized or disconnected families.

The systemic focus yielded measurable shifts in school climate and community trust across the district: 91% of APS families officially reported that their child's school maintained a positive and welcoming culture. Also, 80% of students expressed that they felt like they belonged in their school community. Beyond these data points, overall family engagement within school buildings grew exponentially.

The practices implemented to increase belonging were evaluated through progress monitoring, adjustment, and continuous improvement conversations. Implementation was not without challenges, as there was a significant amount of change management, skill building, and improvement of work throughout the year.

The success of that year's initiative successfully laid the critical foundation. Moving into the subsequent academic year, Aurora Public Schools planned to leverage this established trust to transition into research-based, high-impact engagement practices. For the following academic year, APS was set to focus on directly connecting family-school partnerships to student academic achievement.

The leaders of this initiative found that transformations in positive culture happened when the entire district moved in the same direction, intentional relationship-building with families and students took place, and family, student, and community voices were elevated and integrated into structures.

Bella Romero Wellness Festival

Bella Romero Academy, Greeley-Evans School District 6

Submitted by Melissa Bollar, mbollar@greeleyschools.org

Bella Romero Academy is located in an area of Greeley that falls between the geographical cracks of the recreation, outdoor, and general youth and family programs in the community. After two years of hosting a smaller-scale wellness-themed night, staff members decided to host an open-house and resource-fair-style event. This initiative grew into the Bella Wellness Festival.



The two Bella Parent Family Advocates, under the direction of the principal, began the planning process by reaching out to community partners. They then looped in other district and school staff. District 6 Nutrition Services and Wellness, several teachers, and many volunteers were all involved. The team created flyers, designed social media posts, and added a daily countdown to the morning classroom announcements. They mapped out areas of the school to be used for different activities and collected information from community partners in order to provide appropriate space and layout.

The Wellness Festival took place in March 2026. In the Learning Lab, families visited approximately 20 booths featuring mental health professionals, mentorship organizations, city Parks & Recreation, wilderness camps, sports programs, the High Plains Library District, and the Weld County Health Department. The event took place during Ramadan, and out of respect for their Muslim population, all music, food, and dance activities were held in a separate space in the cafeteria. There, D6 Nutrition staff provided house-made hummus and black bean and corn salsa samples. Volunteers from a local high school helped students blend healthy treats on the school's smoothie bikes. Bella staff members provided snacks and a fourth-grade teacher led families in a dance party.

The School Resource Officer hosted a "Fit For The Force" obstacle training course. The seventh-grade science teacher hosted a "Garden-In-A-Glove" activity where everyone planted a starter salsa garden in the fingers of a latex glove, which could later be transferred into the ground at home. In the art room, families picked up information about art therapy and left their mark on a community mural designed specifically for this event. The Gear Up tutor hosted chair yoga while teaching about aromatherapy and plants. Finally, the fifth-grade teacher/coach and the PE teacher/coach held a session in the gym on athlete wellness. Families got to know each other, students introduced their teachers and friends to their parents, families enrolled in community programs, and students who had not historically shown interest in after-school events had a great time.

Feedback included expressions of gratitude for hosting an active event. Parents appreciated that each organization provided literature or instant QR codes for sign-ups and additional information. A primary challenge involved determining whether the team had marketed the event well enough to secure a large turnout.

Advice from the Bella staff is to remain professional, organized, and prepared. They recommend committing to excellent communication. Following the event, they advise thanking the community partners, providing them with statistics and pictures, and sharing overall outcomes and successes with them.

Celebrating Culture and Community Night

Meadow Point Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

Submitted by Emily Prascher, eprascher3@cherrycreekschools.org

Meadow Point Elementary School hosted a Celebration of Culture and Community Night to foster a greater sense of belonging among students and families. A small Title I school, 37% of Meadow Point's community is Spanish-speaking, with families representing more than 12 countries of origin outside the United States.

The concept emerged a year earlier during a Spanish Conversations parent night. Families had expressed interest in hosting tables that would showcase artifacts and dishes from their home countries. Building on this idea, the Community Liaison and Principal planned the event's structure and logistics. To deepen cultural exploration, four organizations offered live performances that introduced students and families to cultures through song, dance, and storytelling. In addition, each classroom selected countries to represent on posters highlighting flags, languages, notable figures or landmarks, and other cultural facts. The art teacher helped students create projects representing art traditions from around the world to be displayed during the event.

Fifteen families hosted tables during Celebrating Culture and Community Night that reflected their cultural heritage through decorations, artifacts, and culturally significant foods. During the first hour, families visited each table and enjoyed dishes from around the world. Students participated through "passports," which were stamped at each table and included prompts related to learning about a new food, country, song, tradition, or cultural attire, as well as meeting a new friend. The second hour of the evening featured live performances by local cultural organizations. Each performance group was given 10 minutes to perform and was encouraged to include an interactive, educational component. Seven students dressed in traditional attire and were showcased on stage between performances. Parents shared brief explanations describing the cultural meaning of the attire. One particularly meaningful performance was the local high school's Latin American Dance club debut. Many students would eventually attend this high school, and the performance showed future opportunities.

The event was evaluated through a survey via a QR code posted throughout the space. The survey was available in both English and Spanish, and a grocery gift card drawing was offered as an incentive. While the survey had a low response rate, families expressed strong appreciation for the event and its focus on cultural connection and community building. Attendance was lower than that of previous family nights. Feedback suggested that timing may have been a contributing factor. The event was held on a Thursday prior to a holiday break.

To replicate this practice, school staff recommend starting to plan early and communicate with many cultural organizations for support. Limited availability and funding constraints posed challenges. By contacting more than 20 organizations, four confirmed and performed. A variety of methods were used to promote the event, including paper flyers, phone calls, e-newsletters, yard signs, and text reminders.





Colorado Rapids Initiative

James Madison STEAM Academy, Greeley-Evans School District 6

Submitted by Fatima Varela, fvarela2@greeleyschools.org

In March 2026, James Madison STEAM Academy (JMSA) middle school students had an opportunity to receive a free Colorado Rapids ticket. The goal of the Colorado Rapids Initiative was to inspire middle school students to be more responsible and accountable for completing their homework.



JAMES MADISON
STEAM ACADEMY

JMSA partnered with the Colorado Rapids to reward and incentivize homework completion by giving students a Colorado Rapids ticket if they completed more than 95% of their homework in March 2026. The Parent Family Advocate at JMSA connected with a Colorado Rapids Senior Account Executive who oversaw group sales. With the help of all middle school teachers and the principal, communication was sent to families to alert them of the opportunity. A letter was sent home at the end of February to let families know this would be happening throughout March.

In April, middle school teachers sent the names of students who achieved the 95% completion rate to the Parent Family Advocate. A total of 58 students, or approximately 24% of middle school students at JMSA, met the goal and received a Colorado Rapids ticket. This incentive was designed to motivate learners, boost self-esteem, and reduce disruptive behaviors so teachers had more teaching time. Family members also received discounted tickets so they could attend together.

Feedback indicated that parents were happy their students were receiving a reward in recognition for their hard work. Many JMSA families did not have the income to attend Rapids' games or participate in other extracurricular activities. This practice gave families an opportunity to spend time with their pre-adolescent children, a critical time to strengthen family bonds, enhance communication, reduce stress, and promote emotional well-being.

Advice for replicating this practice is to communicate with the school's administration and teachers, as well as to inquire about nonprofit organizations that do partnerships like this for Title I schools.

Cookin' with Mama Ray

Alamosa Elementary School K-2, Alamosa School District

Submitted by Genesis Escalon, gescalon@alamosaschools.org

Alamosa School District serves a rural community where access to educational resources and support can be limited. The goal of Cookin' with Mama Ray was to support families by providing practical skills and resources that strengthen learning and daily life at home, such as cooking on a budget.

The people involved with planning and implementing Cookin' with Mama Ray were the district MTSS coordinator, elementary school teachers, a parent liaison, and the founder of Shooting Stars Cultural and Leadership Center, a non-profit community partner located in Alamosa.

Through a National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) literacy grant, Alamosa School District hosted monthly parent meetings designed to provide families with opportunities to learn new skills and access valuable resources. Parents were surveyed to determine what topics they wished to explore and what skills they hoped to develop. One popular topic identified by families at Alamosa Elementary School K-2 was cooking on a budget. In response, Cristalray Dominguez, co-founder of Shooting Stars Cultural and Leadership Center in Alamosa, hosted a special class titled "Cookin' with Mama Ray." During this class, Mama Ray demonstrated how to prepare four different meals, each designed to fit a low budget. She prepared the meals ahead of time, which not only allowed families to see the process step by step but also introduced financial literacy concepts, such as cost management, portion planning, and grocery budgeting. Families received the ingredients needed to recreate the meals at home, allowing them to practice cooking together.



Cookin' with Mama Ray was evaluated through a combination of pre- and post-workshop feedback from families. Before each session, parents filled out a survey to identify their specific needs and interests. After the workshop, parents were invited to provide feedback via a QR code. Responses indicated that families found the classes engaging, informative, and helpful for applying skills at home. Families reported enjoying the class immensely, noting that it helped them save money while also fostering creativity in the kitchen. Students enjoyed participating alongside their parents, making it a fun and educational family activity that encouraged healthy habits, collaboration, and shared learning. This ongoing feedback helped to refine future workshops and tailor content to family needs.

For other schools or districts looking to conduct a similar initiative, Alamosa staff recommend starting by surveying families to identify relevant topics and interests. They also suggest designing interactive, hands-on sessions with practical applications and providing take-home materials. As one facilitator shared, "Families learn best by doing together," and a parent noted, "This experience helped us save money while strengthening family connections at home."



Future Ready Center: A Community Hub for Postsecondary Pathways

Poudre School District

Submitted by Clare Barquero, cbarquer@psdschools.org

The goal of the [Future Ready Center](#) was to increase equitable access to college, career, and life-ready opportunities for all students by creating a centralized, community-based hub for students and families. Poudre School District serves a diverse population, including multilingual learners and families who may face barriers navigating postsecondary systems. Historically, information about career pathways, concurrent enrollment, and workforce opportunities has been spread across multiple departments and locations, making it difficult for families to access and fully understand available options. The Future Ready Center was designed to remove these barriers.

The planning and implementation of the Future Ready Center involved multiple district departments and community partners. Key contributors included Career and Innovation, Language, Culture & Equity, counseling teams, and district leadership. District staff developed partnerships with local businesses, higher education institutions, and community organizations to support programming and real-world opportunities for students. This cross-departmental collaboration required ongoing communication, shared decision-making, and alignment of goals to ensure the center met the needs of students and families.



The Future Ready Center hosted workshops, career fairs, information nights, and hiring fairs for graduating seniors that connected students directly with local employers. Students and families received support with FAFSA completion, scholarship opportunities, career pathway exploration, concurrent enrollment, and industry certifications. The center also supported peer tutoring opportunities in which high school students mentored and tutored middle school students, helping build positive student connections across grade levels.

The Future Ready Center was evaluated through participation data, event attendance, and feedback from students, families, and staff. Early indicators showed increased engagement from families, particularly those who have historically had less access to postsecondary planning resources. Staff also reported stronger connections with students and families and increased awareness of available opportunities. One challenge was coordinating across multiple departments with different priorities, timelines, and funding sources. Additionally, there were important discussions around long-term sustainability and how to align funding to maintain the center's operations. Ensuring consistent communication across departments was essential to addressing these challenges and maintaining momentum.

For those looking to replicate this practice, invest time in building strong cross-department partnerships early, particularly between teams focused on career readiness and those supporting family engagement and equity. Clear planning around funding and long-term sustainability is essential. Centering accessibility, including multilingual support and a welcoming environment, ensures the space meets the needs of all families.

Health and Wellness Fair

Centauri Middle & High School, North Conejos School District

Submitted by Jessica Shawcroft, jesshawcroft24@northconejos.com

Previous Healthy Kids survey results indicated that secondary students in North Conejos wanted to improve school culture, have more student involvement in planned activities, and increase overall student health. Because North Conejos is a rural community, limited access to resources was a barrier for students. The Health and Wellness Committee at Centauri Middle and High School focused on the specific areas identified by students in the Healthy Kids survey. One way that staff addressed these challenges and survey results was through the Health and Wellness Fair.

The Health and Wellness Committee was composed of four school counselors, two nurses, and the food services director. The committee met monthly and originally discussed the idea of the health fair in December. They set a date in April so there was time to plan and conduct outreach to community organizations. The April date also provided a break in the middle of CMAS testing and gave students ideas on how to physically and mentally take care of themselves to prepare for another week of testing.

The Health and Wellness Fair took place on April 9, 2026, at Centauri High School, just after the middle and high school students finished their first week of state testing. Twelve community organizations and two high school wellness clubs volunteered to help. The representatives from each organization provided interactive education on topics such as nutrition, substance use, exercise, mental health, safe driving, self-care, holistic healing, healthy decision-making, and emergency health response. Students received a Bingo card to bring while visiting the booths and obtained signatures to complete the health categories on their cards. The goal of this activity was to motivate students to visit booths and have an educational discussion, using an incentive to drive engagement. Students who achieved a Bingo received a stress ball as a prize for participating in the fair.



An evaluation form was sent to each of the participants in the Health and Wellness Fair. Some challenges included less engagement from the high school students; additionally, presenters noted that they would have liked bingo cards for themselves and felt a bit rushed with the middle school students. Still, 100% of the participants who filled out the evaluation expressed interest in attending future events and felt that it was well organized.

Organizers recommend looking for available resources within the local area, noting that it never hurts to ask. Additionally, they emphasized allowing the planning team ample time to prepare.

Joven Noble

Alamosa School District

Submitted by Genesis Escalon, gescalon@alamosaschools.org

Joven Noble is a culturally responsive program that teaches students social-emotional skills, conflict resolution, and positive decision-making. The goal of offering this program to students in the Alamosa School District was to help them build respect, accountability, and leadership while fostering healthy relationships with peers, family, and the community.

Planning and implementing Joven Noble involved several dedicated individuals. Two Alamosa School District Parent Liaisons played key roles in connecting with students, identifying their needs, and helping organize resources. Jamie Dominguez, co-founder of Shooting Stars Cultural and Leadership Center, a non-profit located in Alamosa, contributed expertise in student engagement and activity coordination. Together, this team coordinated logistics, developed the Joven Noble workshops, and supported students throughout the process, ensuring that each workshop was well-organized, accessible, and meaningful.



Joven Noble was implemented as a structured 12-session circle process. The program incorporated teachings centered around Conocimiento (acknowledgment), Entendimiento (understanding), Integración (integration), and Movimiento (movement), which guided students in developing self-awareness, understanding their cultural identity, and building positive decision-making skills. Through guided discussions, storytelling, mentorship, and reflective activities, students explored topics such as identity, relationships, responsibility, and leadership. The circle process provided a safe and supportive environment where students were encouraged to share their experiences, listen to others, and build trust within the group. As students gained confidence in their voice and identity, they demonstrated improved engagement in school, healthier peer relationships, and an increased ability to manage conflict in positive ways. By addressing both emotional well-being and cultural connection, Joven Noble contributed to a more positive school climate and supported long-term student success.

Joven Noble was evaluated through pre- and post-evaluations that measured student growth in areas such as self-awareness, confidence, emotional regulation, communication skills, and decision-making. Facilitators also observed participation, engagement levels, and behavioral changes throughout the 12 sessions. One challenge was consistent attendance and maintaining student engagement, as many students faced outside responsibilities or barriers that impacted participation. Additionally, building trust took time, as students initially felt hesitant to share personal experiences. However, as the circle developed, students became more open and supportive of one another.

For successful replication of this practice, practice organizers stressed the importance that facilitators receive proper training in the Joven Noble curriculum and understand the cultural foundation of the program. Facilitators need the ability to relate to students through authentic connection, life experiences, and storytelling that reflect an understanding of the challenges youth faced.

Power of Community Partnerships

Englewood Schools

Submitted by Clarice Fortunato, clarice_fortunato@engschools.net

The primary objective of the "Power of Community" initiative was to integrate local community partners directly into the Englewood Schools Family Resource Center (FRC) during its monthly open houses. Englewood serves a substantial number of highly mobile and economically vulnerable families. With the FRC's monthly basic-needs distributions already highly attended, there was a natural opportunity to meet parents exactly where they were.

Planning was led by the FRC team: the District Family, School, Community Partnership/McKinney-Vento Coordinator, the dedicated McKinney-Vento Specialist, and the district CLDE Family Liaison. Externally, a coalition of agency partners committed staff resources; this included the Colorado Economic Defense Project to administer immediate emergency housing aid, Doctors Care to resolve Medicaid questions, representatives from local holiday gift programs, the Colorado State University Extension to sign up families for nutrition and health workshops, the local public library to coordinate summer literacy opportunities, and many more.

During the monthly open houses, the FRC was arranged to blend direct basic-needs shopping with low-barrier intake tables staffed by community partners and non-profit organizations. As families selected clothing, food, and essential items, they could engage with different representatives who provided on-the-spot information and assistance. When a family secured rental assistance or health insurance, student chronic absenteeism dropped significantly because underlying structural disruptions were mitigated before they impacted the classroom. The practice cultivated a profound sense of district trust and communal belonging, reassuring families that their schools were safe, holistic centers of comprehensive care.



The initiative was evaluated using a mixed-methods approach that paired internal data tracking systems with qualitative community metrics. By cross-referencing FRC attendance logs with the district's student information database, the data analyst tracked long-term impacts on student attendance and stability. This analysis revealed that a record 823 families utilized the resource center during that school year alone, with 34% identifying as active McKinney-Vento participants. Despite these attendance successes, tracking the final outcomes of families referred to external community partners proved challenging; while it was confirmed that families initially reached out to these agencies, the results of those external support services could not be verified.

For districts looking to replicate this practice, organizers recommend establishing baseline data and clear partner agreements early in the school year. The focus was placed on building sustainable, relationship-driven partnerships rather than simple, one-time item distributions. Bringing multiple community resources together under one roof created an impact that single agencies could not match alone.

A school secretary closely involved in the process reflected on this success: "The true power of this practice was seeing a father come into the resource center planning to relocate due to housing instability, and leave with rental assistance, a summer reading plan for his boys, and a renewed determination to keep his children enrolled in the district's schools."

Saguache County Tri-District Collaborative Resource Fair

San Luis Valley Joint Interagency Oversight Group

Submitted by Matthew L. Tulley, matthew.tulley.lys@gmail.com

Encompassing an area of 3,170 miles, Saguache County is the fifth largest county in the state of Colorado. Within this county are three school districts: Moffat, Mountain Valley, and Center. It is an incredibly vast and rural area that often struggles with keeping its communities connected. With the help of the San Luis Valley (SLV) Joint Interagency Oversight Group (IOG), the Tri-District Collaboration came together to connect their students and families to the most valuable resources in the San Luis Valley through the Tri-District Collaborative Resource Fair.

In conversations with the SLV Joint Interagency Group, the superintendents of the Tri-District Collaboration shared that they felt their students and families were disconnected from their community due to recent transitions in leadership within the schools. School leaders and staff felt they needed to repair that harm and begin to build trust.

One of the solutions that came out of those impactful conversations was to host a Resource Fair that created community, partnership, and connection. By having a community event, relationships that may have been fractured through the leadership transitions could begin to heal. Families would feel more inclined to engage with their school, build connections with staff, and learn about resources that could help uplift their families in times of need. Bringing together community-based organizations allowed families to develop self-agency while feeling safe to lean on their school district. It allowed the districts to be present with families, which often was not an option during day-to-day operations.

The San Luis Valley Behavioral Health Group, National Guard, Center for Restorative Programs, San Luis Valley Area Health Education Center, Alpine Achievers, Colorado Workforce, Valley-Wide Health Systems, Boys and Girls Club, Veterans Affairs, Rocky Mountain Health Plans Care Coordination, 12th Judicial Self-Help, La Puente, Colorado Department of Education, Care and Share, Saguache County Public Health, Healthy Young Minds, Center School District Nursing Program, and Colorado State Patrol were all in attendance to share about the services they provide.



The event itself was held on the football field of the Mountain Valley School District. The fair featured a raffle filled with items from community businesses and gift cards. A DJ, bounce houses, and snow cones were provided by the IOG, while the three school districts shared costs for food, staff stipends, and travel expenses.

Food provided that day included a nacho bar and homemade sopapillas. Mountain Valley School District staff prepared the meal. Shuttles were arranged for community members; the committee leveraged all three schools as pick-up and drop-off sites using their bussing capabilities, while leaning on Freedom Wagon to transport individuals from the KV Estates area to the event. The organizers worked hard to build an extensive web of support for the community.

This practice was evaluated by the service providers who hosted a booth. Street data was collected by way of the superintendents and the SLV Joint Interagency Group Director walking the event and asking for feedback directly and in real-time. The planning committee recognized a few challenges. They were competing with many Cinco de Mayo celebrations in other parts of the Valley. It was also the first iteration of this event, so messaging and advertising may not have been optimal. About 60 community members and 30 service providers attended the event, which was considered a success for a first-time event in an area that had not engaged often in the past. The planning committee intended to incorporate a specific street data point received to make this a traveling resource fair and have the districts in the Tri-District Collaboration take turns hosting.

The biggest piece of advice was to strategically select the day of the event so as to not compete with other events. Initially, the planning committee had thought they were being forward-thinking about Cinco de Mayo celebrations and had chosen the right day, but it still had not been enough.

Santa Fe Trail Day

Las Animas High School, Las Animas School District

Submitted by Addie Wallace, addie.wallace@la-schools.net

The goal of Santa Fe Trail Day at Las Animas High School was to engage students, families, alumni, and community members in a shared celebration of local history, student leadership, and school pride. This long-standing tradition—then in its 92nd year—served as the longest-running student-sponsored event in Colorado. Rooted in the community’s connection to the Santa Fe Trail, Bent’s Fort, and surrounding historic sites, the event supported a positive school culture and reinforced student ownership of meaningful, real-world experiences.

Planning and implementation were led primarily by the Las Animas High School Student Council, with support from school administration, staff advisors, art teachers, and community partners. Students took the lead in organizing committees, coordinating events, and communicating with community members, alumni, and local organizations.

Santa Fe Trail Day was a full-day, school- and community-wide event. The day included a downtown parade featuring school groups, royalty candidates, antique vehicles, and community organizations. At Las Animas High School, students participated in Frontier King and Queen contests, costume contests, and leadership-based activities that highlighted character and school involvement. Art students designed t-shirts and the official event poster, selected by students to represent the celebration, while all artwork was displayed throughout the school building. Community members participated in a People’s Choice vote. Academic and extracurricular displays showcased student learning, allowing families and visitors to engage with classroom outcomes and school programs. A ranch burger lunch brought students, families, alumni, and community members together in an informal setting. The day concluded with square dancing, awards, and the crowning of Santa Fe Trail Day King and Queen. These experiences promoted student leadership and reinforced Las Animas High School as a central hub of the community.

Evaluation of the practice occurred through participation rates, student leadership reflection, and community feedback gathered informally during and after the event. Staff and Student Council advisors reviewed planning effectiveness and student involvement to improve future celebrations. Challenges included coordinating large-scale logistics and balancing academic schedules with event preparation. Ensuring consistent communication across students, staff, and community partners was an ongoing focus for improvement.

For replication, the most important advice was to trust students with real leadership responsibilities and build strong community partnerships early in the planning process. A staff advisor noted that the event worked because the students owned it from start to finish.



Sixth Grade Job Shadow

Las Animas Elementary School, Las Animas School District

Submitted by Cathy Coy, cathy.coy@la-schools.net

Las Animas Elementary recognized that it was never too early to start students thinking about their futures, specifically potential careers. The goal of the 6th Grade Job Shadow was to give the sixth-grade students an in-person experience to see what a particular career might actually look like.

The coordination team included the classroom teacher and two other staff members without students, which allowed for flexibility during the workday to contact current and potential community business partners.



The 6th Grade Job Shadow was part of a career project that students completed at the end of sixth grade. The students first completed an interest survey, from which a list of three possible careers was identified for each student. From that list, the coordination team reached out to potential businesses to see if they would be willing to host a student or students. Wherever possible, students were grouped together. For example, a tour at the local hospital included students with a career choice of nurse, doctor, surgeon, physical therapist, or psychiatrist. While on the tour, the students each asked previously prepared questions. The job shadows typically lasted approximately three hours. Students then sent a follow-up thank-you note to the participating organization, along with an invitation to attend the sixth-grade Career Exploration Night held at the school.

The students were all very excited to do their job shadow. The teacher reported that the classroom climate was one of positive energy and good behavior in the weeks leading up to the job shadows. When students returned, they were excited to share the experience with classmates. The 6th Grade Job Shadow experience took the career exploration project to a whole different level of student buy-in and participation.

The informal feedback was that the job shadow system was a huge hit. Formally, the organizations were contacted and asked for feedback on how the tours went and what should be kept in mind for the following year. The overall time commitment, in addition to being creative with connections in the community, were the biggest challenges.

Recommendations to replicate this practice include keeping a list of all contacts; scheduling all job shadows within a two-to-three-day window if possible, as this was much easier for the teacher to work around and less disruptive overall for the class; not expecting the teacher to be in charge of contacting or scheduling; and pre-coaching the students on expected behavior and common manners, such as handshakes and eye contact.

The Heart of Arvada Table

Arvada High School, Jeffco Public Schools

Submitted by Audrey Smallcanyon & Julie Waage, audrey.smallcanyon@jeffco.k12.co.us

Operating within a district prioritizing student wellness, the Heart of Arvada combated rising youth mental health challenges by equipping students and adults with tools to foster trust and belonging.

Planning and implementation were a collaboration between Longer Tables, Jefferson County Public Health, and a diverse cross-section of Arvada High School, uniting sophomore, junior, and senior student leaders alongside school administrators, teachers, and support staff. The culminating event then welcomed local officials, businesses, school staff and students, and members of the greater Arvada community.

This practice centered on six 90-minute workshops for six student leaders to learn how to build authentic relationships. The curriculum emphasized servant leadership and explored "mask theory"—decorating physical masks to reflect images shown to the world versus what is kept hidden. The training helped build student confidence, public speaking skills, project management skills, and strong workforce readiness skills. Upon finishing the program, students received a certificate of professional growth. Driven by their training, the students created an impromptu addition to the initial plan: hosting a "mini longer table" during lunch, inviting classmates to eat with them using structured connection questions. By exhibiting the principles they learned, student leaders made an immediate impact, noticing isolated peers and reducing campus alienation.

The program culminated in a community capstone project where the student leaders planned and hosted a dinner gathering, with an initial goal of welcoming 120 guests and accommodating up to 150. This allowed them to foster social cohesion while aligning with the broader Longer Tables initiative to host 150 tables across Colorado, celebrating the state's 150 years of history through shared community meals.

Evaluation data was captured through student mask reflections and observation of their impromptu lunch event. A post-project debrief provided a greater understanding of the start-to-finish process. Future cycles were planned to formally evaluate impact through structured pre- and post-surveys to objectively measure long-term growth in leadership confidence, as well as increased impact on state/district surveys of school-wide belonging, and sustained campus psychological safety.

Challenges included coordinating youth-adult schedules, navigating initial hesitation regarding vulnerability, and coordinating community partners on such a short timeline. Future iterations would engage community partners much sooner to ensure that the needs of the table were met.

The organizers emphasized prioritizing relationships over logistics and starting early to build trust authentically. They recommended involving all participants in planning, implementation, and evaluation to foster engagement and sustainable outcomes. As one guest noted, creating space for connection sparked an immediate impact.



Wish for Wheels

James Madison Steam Academy, Greeley-Evans School District 6

Submitted by Fatima Varela, fvarela2@greeleyschools.org

In April 2026, James Madison Steam Academy (JMSA) partnered with Wish for Wheels, a nonprofit organization, and Walmart in Greeley to give 85 second graders a free bicycle and helmet. Wish for Wheels' mission is to empower the well-being of kids, families, and communities through the gift of a brand-new bike and helmet for students in Title I schools.



The partnership began with the Build/Give Specialist and School & Partner Relations at Wish for Wheels, who reached out to the Parent Family Advocate at JMSA. The principal was very involved in this event and Walmart volunteers helped with building the bikes and teaching the second graders how to ride their brand-new bikes.

Before implementing the event, the Parent Family Advocate collected signed consent/waiver forms from every parent/guardian. Wish for Wheels provided a flyer with space to add school details to be given to every second-grade family. JMSA staff answered planning questions, some of which included: "Of your 85 second graders, do you have any who use a wheelchair or have IEPs and need physical adaptations? May we use your dumpster/recycling for boxes and trash?"

The principal greeted the Wish for Wheels team when they arrived. They then received a tour of the school and were shown where to set up. An estimated 40 volunteers participated and learned a little bit about JMSA and the school community. Wish for Wheels and Walmart volunteers built 85 bikes on the school's basketball court. The bike giveaway took an hour and fifteen minutes. Only two classes came outside at a time to ensure the giveaway went smoothly. Wish for Wheels asked each second grader to pick a volunteer and put a nametag on their new bike and another on their helmet. Volunteers then helped each student with fitting and sizing. Once ready to ride, volunteers followed the students on their bikes around the playground blacktop. Many families joined to watch the giveaway.

One challenge was that many parents thought it was a raffle or that the bike giveaway was not real. The Parent Family Advocate had to assure parents that this was a genuine gift from a foundation and Walmart, and that it was actually happening.

When replicating this event, coordinators highlight the need to be patient and communicate with teachers and parents in a variety of ways to ensure every student has the opportunity to receive a bicycle. Communication with the school administration is also crucial. Most importantly, wear comfortable shoes on the day of the event because it involved a lot of walking.

For more information and
partnering materials:

SACPIE

www.cde.state.co.us/sacpie

CDE

cde.state.co.us/familyengagement

Questions

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