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.