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.