ACCESS Celebration

Olander Elementary School, Poudre School District

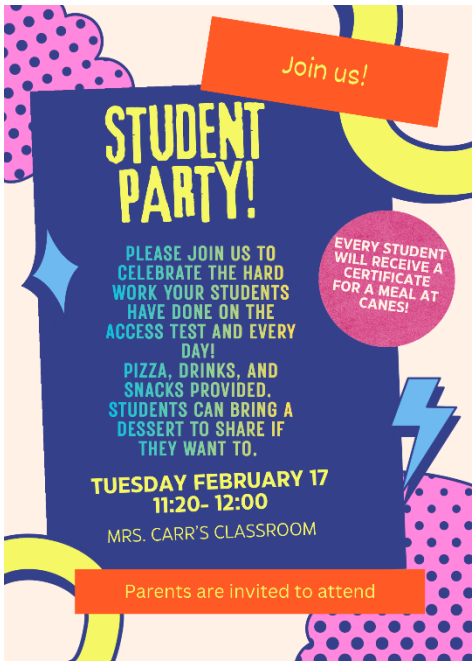
Submitted by Marcela Santamaria Guzman, msguzman@psdschools.org

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.