

Newcomer Academy and Pantry Holly Hills/Ridge Elementary School Denver, CO

The goal of the Newcomer Academy and Pantry is to reinforce the relationship between the school and the community by simplifying the educational system for newcomer families. This encourages families to be involved and help their children reach their goals. As a result of the Newcomer Academy and Pantry, newcomer families feel welcomed and supported.



Many people were involved in the planning and implementation of the practice. The administration, principal and assistant principal, provided the location for the Newcomer Academy and Pantry. Ms. Leslie Navarro and her team provided [HopSkipDrive](#) to students facing housing issues and needing transportation to school. The team also sent food, clothing, and hygiene products to families in need. Holly Hills' staff supported the pantry by donating coats for all newcomers, winter gear, snacks, and other clothing.

The Newcomer Academy targets families' and students' needs by helping them fill out their parent forms and free and reduced lunch applications and explaining the consequences of being out of school without any reason. It also motivated families to participate in school cultural events and P.A.S.S. (Partnership for Academically Successful Students) meetings by listening to their concerns and being the bridge between the school and families.

The practice was recognized by the district. The superintendent visited the school and honored the community liaison and the cultural liaison with a Hero Prize, in recognition of all their hard work in coordinating the Newcomer Academy and Pantry. Many challenges were overcome because of the coordinators in charge of the practice being Spanish speakers. They were able to communicate and build relationships with families and students.

The advice they would give to someone wanting to replicate the practice is to work from the heart, be reliable, put yourself in other people's shoes, and be patient with students and families. Be generous with your time, do your work with love and a smile, and reassure newcomer families that they are a part of your community.