

Family Lunch Events

Las Animas Elementary School, Las Animas School District

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Las Animas School District (LASD) is considered a high needs district with 83% of students qualifying for Free/Reduced lunch, 17% in Special Education, and approximately 15% living with grandparents or other caregivers. LASD strives to create, maintain, and sustain meaningful partnerships with students and their families. At Las Animas Elementary School (LAES), each student and their family participates in a home visit with a school staff member before the start of school and over 90% of students and families participate in a progress conference twice per year. Family Lunch Events are a next step to nurture and expand the partnerships between staff and families, with the goal to increase the comfort of trusted adults at school and the transparency and approachability of school staff.

The LAES Principal, Family Advocate, Administrative Assistant, Wellness Coordinator, and Cafeteria Staff all worked together to plan Family Lunch Events. Stronger Connection Grant funds paid for the events in the spring of 2025. Future Family Lunch Events will be funded using Parent Involvement Funds.

Each Wednesday, every student in one grade level (K-6th) invited a trusted adult to join them for lunch at school at no cost. For example, Kindergarten Family lunch was held on Wednesday, January 15, 2025. Each child invited one adult to eat with them for free by taking home a ticket one week in advance. RSVPs helped staff plan accordingly. Students were encouraged to invite parents, grandparents, siblings, neighbors or any other trusted adult. Upon arrival, guests gathered in a school common area and received a personal welcome from school staff, including the principal or family advocate. As the students came in from recess and lined up for lunch, their adult joined them in line and shadowed the child's lunchtime experience.



Family Lunch Events were evaluated based on participation percentage and informal feedback. Over the 14 events this spring, LAES averaged over 65% participation weekly. In order to support students that did not have family participation, school and district staff and volunteers joined the event. Some parents had personal anxieties around the social setting in the cafeteria. They picked up their children and took them out for lunch rather than staying.

Many adults left with comments such as "Thank you for having us, this was awesome. Let us know when you do this again." Grandparents were especially tickled at the opportunity.