



The Power of Follow-Up

Independence Elementary School, Cherry Creek School District

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At Horizon Community Middle School, a place as diverse as the 700 students who walk its halls, caring for one another and building deeper connections isn't just encouraged—it's essential. Every staff member plays a unique role. Together, staff create an environment where the strength of each individual is recognized, and trust is built through collaboration.

The goal of this practice is to support families and students in a way that helps everyone feel seen, feel heard, and feel supported. Putting this into practice isn't simple. It starts with awareness—recognizing the needs of individuals and opening consistent channels of communication. Each staff member plays a critical part in ensuring everyone stays present, intentional, and proactive. Take, for example, the student who came to school last winter without a jacket in the middle of a snowstorm. The security team noticed and acted, coordinating with the Community Liaison to provide him with winter clothing. This may seem small, but in reality, it's transformative by providing safety, dignity, and care. Or consider the families who face housing challenges, food insecurity, or barriers to transportation. School staff must be able to see these needs, listen carefully, and help connect families to resources. Meeting basic needs is transformational for families.

Building a community where staff, students, and families feel empowered to show up and help one another is the foundation. The bridge between families and the school is not optional—it is crucial. Horizon Middle School is actively creating the space for trust—through awareness, sharing, and collaboration. With activities like McKinney Vento events, they not only provide needed support, but also foster a sense of unity. Whether it's through food distribution at Husky Market, help from churches, or referrals to community services, they ensure families have a place to turn.

Staff also build connections through experiences—Voices of Color, multicultural nights, and parent observation days—where families are invited into the school environment. These opportunities allow them to witness, firsthand, the daily routines, classrooms, and culture that shape their children's lives. For many, this is the first step in building lasting trust and partnership. As one family said after participating, "This made a difference in our family."

Follow-Up with Families

