

# Staff-Wide Positive Phone Calls

## Mesa Elementary School

### Boulder, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education



Mesa Elementary School launched a Families and Educators Together (FET) team in the fall of 2021. One of the main goals of the team was to improve underrepresented families' sense of inclusion in the school community. As the team discussed potential ways for the entire staff to expand its efforts

to deepen partnerships with families, the idea quickly emerged of a positive phone call system that would include built-in time for staff to connect with dozens of families each month. Research has shown that positive calls are highly impactful in terms of both strengthening relationships between staff and families and in sparking academic gains for students. Additionally, the purpose of this effort was to give families the gift of unexpected positive communication about their children. There are multiple benefits to this, not the least of which is reaching and connecting with families who may feel less connected.

This initiative emerged from Mesa's FET team, which consisted of six parents (all from different countries of origin outside of the United States), four educators, and the school principal. In the winter, the team discussed the scope and details of launching a positive phone call system. The principal brought the idea to the staff in February and the effort launched in March.

Each staff member was asked to make three positive contacts a month from March through May during late start mornings or Thursday afternoons when the principal designated time for positive outreach in lieu of a faculty meeting. It was left to their discretion which students they recognized. They were encouraged to start calls with the friendly conversation starter, "I thought you should know..." Staff were entrusted to follow through with this responsibility and were not asked to complete a form or any other documentation. While staff was encouraged to make phone calls as the preferred method of communication, they were permitted to use other communications methods when unable to reach by phone.

The principal met with the leadership team to debrief the implementation of the practice in the spring. The feedback about the experience was universally positive. Some challenges included playing phone tag with parents or full voice mails which led to an email that may have been less personal. Some teachers also struggled to get into the habit of making the calls.

In the future it may be better to require everyone to make phone calls at the same time (e.g. during the trade-out faculty meeting). It was helpful for the principal to send a couple of reminders to staff each month and to continue to provide time for "share outs" about the experience. Likewise, the principal could model and participate (as it's every bit as rewarding for the principal), and Mesa intends to extend the practice to support staff (e.g. the custodian calling three families per month) to make it a true school-wide initiative.