

Community Advisory Groups

Denver Public Schools

Denver, CO



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Denver Public Schools seek to create spaces of engagement with the focus of being inclusive. However, many communities do not always feel welcomed or comfortable in those spaces. A family's sense of belonging is tremendously important to feeling comfortable to advocate, collaborate, and bring their authentic selves to the table. Over the years, various advisory groups have been successful when supported in the right way.

To this end the Superintendent, Chief of Staff, and Executive Director of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) set out to create the Latine Education Advisory Committee (LEAC) to serve as an exemplar for other communities to create spaces that people could feel comfortable in, grow their knowledge and capacity, and impart wisdom and experience. The group sought to present a community voice to help district leaders make thoughtful and more informed decisions for all DPS stakeholders. The Community Engagement Manager and the Operational Team Managers played key roles in operationalizing and taking this from theory to action!

This committee has provided a framework for other communities to build similar advisory spaces that model inclusiveness and represent what the community wants to see. The excitement and desire to engage was evidenced by over 100 applications. The advisory committee will leverage this to make sure all communities feel valued and encouraged to engage with the school district.

This practice continues to be evaluated using pre- and post-survey data. These surveys measure how people feel about various district structures that capture their feedback, measure how welcoming various communities feel, and generate ideas and opportunities from the community to partner on in the future.

It's worthwhile to create more of these types of spaces for community to increase connections, build capacity, and create deeper relationships that help share the accountability and leverage specific community voice. These are spaces that help increase participation and comfortability in a number of other spaces such as the District Accountability Committee (DAC) and parent or community statewide taskforce. It also creates authentic dialogues within various communities. From the Community Engagement Manager, Amanda Bouche's, perspective, "In building this group it was great to see how so many folks were representing a shared community but how they also brought a lot of diversity in terms of perspective and experience." The Executive Director of FACE, Adella Arredondo, commented on the importance of creating and tending to this space: "This group advises the district and its leaders on important elements and aspects in the Latine and Hispanic communities of Denver; to advocate for increased educational opportunities for our students and families in the Latine community."