

Special Dessert

Coronado Hills Elementary School
Thornton, CO



The special dessert practice at Coronado Hills Elementary was started as a way to continuously motivate students to become role models for others and themselves. Coronado focuses on the following characteristics that promote positive attitudes: Appreciation, Enthusiasm, Confidence, Commitment, Empathy, Tolerance, Cooperation, Creativity, Curiosity, Integrity, Independence, and Respect. Students are given the opportunity to earn “green tickets” that are placed in grade level mason jars. When a student is recognized for demonstrating one of these or several characteristics, they earn the right to a green ticket. Towards the latter half of the month, the family liaison randomly chooses two tickets from each Mason jar per class in each grade level to attend the special dessert held once per month. Each teacher also has the opportunity to choose one more student, and the three students per class are recognized for the month to enjoy a dessert.

The Positive Attitude with Support (PAWS) committee, which consists of teachers and staff, decides what the theme of the month will be for special dessert. They choose a destination or place in the world that students can be educated on regarding culture, traditions, language, lifestyle, etc. The family liaison is responsible for researching the destination and creating a collage that highlights the features of the country or state chosen.

Personalized invitations are created so that the principal may deliver them to each student who has been invited to be part of the celebration for exhibiting positive characteristics. Parents are also invited to enjoy this special dessert with their children. Part of the preparation for the event involves a group of parents known as “Las Comadres” at Coronado Hills that create the centerpieces and decorations for the celebration. This group takes charge of setting up the lobby for the monthly event, serving the dessert, and clean up.

On the actual day of the celebration, the family liaison delivers the presentation about the chosen destination, complete with a collage and props. A period of time is given to the group for questions and answers. The presentation is repeated every 20 minutes for the benefit of all grade levels. One example of a destination was Italy. The liaison focused on various Italian monuments throughout the country. The desserts chosen highlighted the traditional baked goods of panettone and pizzelles. The center pieces were a trifold replica of the Leaning Tower of Pisa and the Colosseum of Rome.

Although there is not a formal evaluation process for Special Dessert, Coronado has observed that the practice has made a lasting impression on students, parents, and staff. Students are motivated and work hard to earn the green tickets. Parents and staff have come together as a community and mentioned on many occasions how much they love the entire event that is special to their students and families.

For other schools who might be considering adopting this practice, it may be best to form an organized group of staff and parents to put all of the details together. Choose interesting places with rich history and unique features. Most of all, enjoy the process and the community engagement that is formed when parents are welcomed and given a mission with purpose linked to academics.