

Parent Engagement Network

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

For 15 years, Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) has partnered with the Parent Engagement Network (PEN), a parent organization, to provide education, support, and resources around a variety of issues impacting the youth and families in the Boulder County. Based on research findings that show children with connected and engaged parents are more likely to be involved in fewer risk-taking behaviors, as well as more likely to be resilient in the face of life's challenges, PEN is a universal prevention program that provides education, resources, and support to youth and families throughout BVSD.

Volunteer parents spearhead all phases of development, implementation, and evaluation of PEN, in collaboration with BVSD administration. Annual letters are sent to principals in BVSD outlining the opportunities PEN offers to schools, parents, staff, and the community. PEN School teams of parent volunteers are organized in the majority of elementary, middle, and high schools in BVSD, and collaborate with the principal, school counselors, and staff throughout the year to create action plans focused on improving the school climate to support student success.

The goals of PEN are to increase parent engagement in the home, school, and community contexts in which pre-kindergarten through 12th grade families interact; to support parents in acquiring the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to enhance foundational parenting competencies, build relationships, engage in personal development, and be resourceful in their parenting; collaborate with organizations and professionals to deliver strength-based programming that supports positive youth development and decreases risk-taking behavior in youth; and to respond to the changing individual, school, and community level parent needs.

PEN develops and sponsors educational events that address current trends and parenting issues. Topics range from risk behaviors such as self-harm, eating disorders, depression, suicide prevention, and bullying, to preventative tips on raising resilient youth, building positive family relationships, fostering a healthy self-image, communication skills, and managing stress and anxiety. Programs are translated and interpreted to support the growing Latino population in Boulder County.

Two evaluation surveys are consistently used to direct programs and to evaluate program and community involvement effectiveness and parent volunteer training for upcoming school years. PEN presentations are continuously rated as being high quality by those who attend PEN community parent education presentations. Attendees report the PEN presentations serve a variety of needs.

The school based parent engagement model of PEN is replicable, customizable, flexible, and sustainable. Such a model can be adapted to fit the needs of the individual setting and community. PEN programs engage, educate, and empower parents in developing the physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and mental health, well-being and safety of youth, families, and communities.