

The HUB @ Foothills Foodies

Foothills Elementary School

Lakewood, CO



The HUB @ Foothills Foodies, located on the Foothills Elementary School campus, offers free supplemental food, clothing, and wrap-around services to all of Jeffco’s Green Mountain Articulation families. Foothills Elementary is a Title I school, where 76% of the student population qualify for free and reduced lunch. The school strives to be a valued community partner and has developed a critical role to better address a spectrum of needs for struggling families.

The HUB @ Foothills Foodies, which is 100% sufficient because of donations and volunteers, has the capacity to serve over 1500 families within the articulation area. To date, community partners have secured over 2000 pounds of food, thousands of personal hygiene products, and over \$6000 in monetary donations. These partners include the Concordia Lutheran Church, Lakewood Connects, Green Mountain Safeway, A Precious Child, Mission Lakewood Church, the Foothills PTA, Green Mountain Articulation Schools, Foothills Rotary Club, Foothills PTA, and private donors.

The HUB is recognized as a Health and Human Services Academy Career Pathway for Foothills students. Not only does it serve a vital community support function, but it also provides a unique opportunity for elementary age students to experience service. Students stock shelves with food and clothing items and assist in running the HUB as a store by welcoming and assisting shoppers and taking inventory. Students learn that they are never too young to make a meaningful difference in their community.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the HUB has become more critical than ever. Without skipping a beat, Foothills staff and volunteers began providing Grab and Go breakfasts and lunch services through the Jeffco Public Schools Food and Nutrition Office. Since schools switched to online instruction in March, The HUB at Foothills Foodies has provided an estimated 1,080 bags of food to families which include breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, and hygiene items.

One Foothills parent, who is currently fighting cancer, shared: “Every month is just a struggle to keep medical bills from going to collections and paying the bills for all of our kids. Being able to supplement our groceries takes a little bit of stress out of that situation.” Another parent added: “My husband’s income has been slashed. We have 2 teenage boys that eat nonstop. This food has helped them from going hungry.”

Foothills Elementary was recognized by Lakewood’s Mayor Adam Paul and Jeffco Public School Board President Susan Harmon for its innovative work. Channel 7 and Channel 4 featured the HUB at Foothills Foodies on their newscasts and the Lakewood Sentinel shared with its readers about the resources offered to the community through this utterly amazing collaborative.

Social Emotional Learning GET Together

Laurene Edmondson Elementary School

Loveland, CO



Laurene Edmondson Elementary School's Guaranteed Education Team (GET) Together initiative began three years ago to boost the parent voice in decision-making. This year, Edmondson staff used a GET Together to help families understand the basic concepts of social emotional learning (SEL).

The success of the SEL GET Together was a community affair! The mental health team, including the principal, psychologist, social worker, counselor, and SEL paraprofessional, took the lead in planning the GET Together. This team worked closely with the family, school, and community partnership liaison, Parent Teacher Association, and School Accountability Committee. Staff worked as a collaborative whole to finalize planning and implementation of this event including logistics, prepping materials, and presenting some of the sessions. Crossroads Church and Thompson School District staff both provided volunteers and conducted presentations.



Prior to the event, school staff sent a Sign-Up Genius to families. As a follow-up, staff created individualized flyers with each teacher highlighting two areas that they felt would be beneficial for families to attend. Teachers also made 3-5 personal phone calls to the families they especially wanted to attend. The response rate increased about three-fold after these additional outreach efforts.

The actual event began with a 30 minute "soft start" in the gym with a zones of regulation check in, dinner, and SEL activities at each table to simulate how we start our day at school with students. After the soft start, school-aged students remained in the gym for a make-and-take of at home SEL tools, while younger students went to a room for childcare, and adults attended their two chosen 25-minute sessions. At the end of each session, the adults filled out an electronic survey on chrome books.

As a result of this event, families and staff now speak the same SEL language. This information especially came in handy during remote schooling due to COVID-19. Staff could easily remind families about strategies and tools to use in the home learning environment (e.g., cozy corners, calming strategies, zones of regulation at home, setting limits with schoolwork expectations). Staff created additional videos for families highlighting the previous strategies and tools that were presented at the GET Together.

Surveys indicated that families felt like the GET Together was "calming," "sets them up for success," and that they "wanted more." Staff commented that the planning was done well and was a whole-school effort. Edmondson's hard work and partnership sustainability has not gone unnoticed. The GET Together work was featured in the [Hetchinger report](#), published in February 2020.

Spring Remote Learning 2020

Edgewater Elementary School

Edgewater, CO



Edgewater Elementary staff, students, and families always look forward to the annual Spring Carnival. This event allows students, teachers, staff, and parents to come together for one during the school year to share memories and create more. This year's event was going to have a literature focus. Unfortunately, like so many other long-awaited plans, the Spring Carnival was canceled because of COVID-19.

All students, families, and teachers had to turn to remote learning—a huge change with many obstacles and challenges. Luckily, these new realities didn't dampen Edgewater staff's spirit as they found other ways to support students and strengthen partnerships with families.

Teachers helped their students throughout this time of new learning while they themselves were learning how to manage this new system. Many families had to become much more involved with their child's education due to distance learning. Staff took great effort in reaching out to families that needed support with technology, internet services, food and other resources. In turn, families were willing and available to receive support from staff members in setting up internet services and applications such as SeeSaw, Google Classroom and Google Meet.

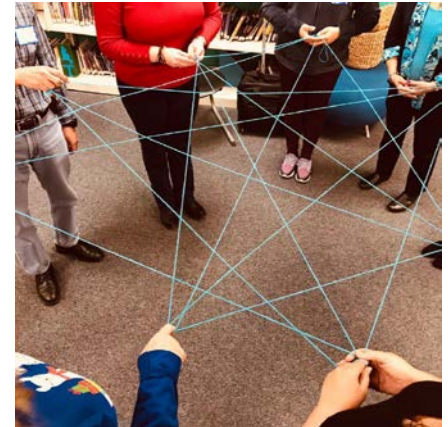
During remote learning, Edgewater staff saw an increase of families helping their children with schoolwork. For example, in some primary grade levels, students were asked to video tape their reading. In the video, you can see and/or hear some families helping the student sound out words, taking turns reading, or just encouraging them to keep going. Many families joined Google Meet sessions to learn instructional strategies to support their child at home or to touch base with the teacher. Staff noticed a level of family engagement that we had not experienced before. Even the school principal experienced an increase in families reaching out through emails and phone calls.



The highlight during this difficult time was during Teacher Appreciation Week. Many families and students sent notes, photos, videos, and poems to thank their teachers for all the hard work they do every day. Many staff members shared that they had never experienced the level of gratitude and appreciation they received from our families and students.

Edgewater's mission is to provide a quality education for every student every day. During these challenging times, all stakeholders demonstrated what this mission is all about. Edgewater's family engagement liaison explained: "Even though the Spring Carnival was not an event to engage our families this school year, we found that remote learning formed partnerships between school and families that will have a positive impact moving forward. We are proud of our school community where everyone showed that 'all means all.'"

Removing real or perceived barriers for culturally and linguistically diverse families by building strong partnerships with two-way communication has proven to increase family engagement for Douglas County School District (DCSD). Following analysis of past family engagement efforts, staff realized that DCSD practices were aimed at sharing information with families and eliciting feedback instead of offering opportunities in which parents had a voice and created a common goal together. Leveraging the relationships built by two bilingual cultural and family liaisons provided an opportunity to bring families together.



To begin a plan for removing barriers to multilingual parent engagement, DCSD, in partnership with Patsy Roybal, Consultant with Families for Excellence in Education, engaged in a series of workshops, conversations, and goal-setting sessions. In close partnership with Roybal, a series of five workshops were created and offered in a bilingual setting. A local church that many of our families attend offered space to hold the workshops. Each workshop included opportunities for parent input, feedback, and experiential learning.

The first workshop outlined the research that links academic achievement to student success. In the second workshop, parents learned about the school system, including the leadership structure, district accountability committee, and the school accountability committees. Workshop three focused on academic standards, analyzing school performance frameworks, and assessments such as CMAS and ACCESS. Workshop four built upon families' desire to have their voices heard, so they practiced public speaking skills and built confidence. The final session celebrated graduates of the workshops with a certificate and cake.

Connection

Parents growing together with their children

PURPOSE:

1. TO BE THE VOICE OF BILINGUAL PARENTS
2. TO HAVE REPRESENTATION WHEN MAKING DECISIONS
3. TO HELP PARENTS GET INVOLVED IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
4. TO PROMOTE THE INCLUSION OF BILINGUAL PARENTS BY HELPING THEM TO OVERCOME FEAR AND REMOVE REAL OR PERCEIVED BARRIERS THAT MAY EXIST.

Following the initial five workshops, some families received additional support from Roybal to become trainers themselves. These families met to plan their next steps, choose a name for their newly formed parent advocacy group, and defined their mission. A series of facilitated discussions resulted in a name, clear mission, and vision for the group. This was an organic process that united families with a common purpose and firmly rooted them in the work.

Before the parents could facilitate the workshops for other families, the COVID-19 pandemic closed the meeting spaces. Conexión continued to meet via Zoom and invited families to join for Q and A sessions offered by the parents. Conexión is in the process of planning how they might offer mini sessions of the workshops via Zoom next school year until in-person training is allowed by the local government. Conexión is also hoping to offer Facebook live streaming events to engage more parents.

Wish for Wheels

Ponderosa Elementary School

Aurora, CO



On May 28, 2020, outgoing second grade students at Ponderosa Elementary School were the first of the thirteen Title I school students to receive brand new bicycles and helmets from a partnership with Wish for Wheels. Wish for Wheels is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that gives brand new bicycles and helmets to children in low income communities. Founded in 2004, their first giveaway made it clear that not only do bikes bring health and happiness into the students' lives, but the gift of a new bicycle can motivate a student to "do better" in school. Their unique model bundles corporate philanthropy, team building and employee collaboration together through fund raising, bike building to delivering the new bikes and helmets to students.

This initial event started with the Director of Funded Projects being introduced to Brad Appel, the Founder and CEO of Wish for Wheels. Fortunately for Cherry Creek Schools and the students at Ponderosa, Brad and his team had already received some corporate sponsorships and had bicycles purchased prior to the onset of COVID-19.

Leadership at Ponderosa, in partnership with the Cherry Creek Education Foundation, have a goal to raise \$100,000 dollars over the next two years so that every second-grade student in Cherry Creek's Title I schools can receive new bicycles. Ponderosa's principal explains: "Ultimately, we want to use bicycles not only as a means for a student to get to school, increasing his or her attendance, but as a tool for learning about health, safety, pride of ownership, and fun."

Starting in August 2020, Ponderosa staff will begin tracking attendance, discipline, and achievement data of all the students who received bicycles. Staff will survey both parents and students to see if there have been any significant improvements in the student's life after receiving their bicycle.

As is the case with so many well-planned initiatives, COVID-19 threw a little wrench in this activity. In an ideal situation, the staff and volunteers from the corporation who sponsored the school would come together to build the bikes one day and then give them to students the next day. When the students come to get their bikes, the staff and volunteers make sure that the students' helmets and bikes fit properly and there is time for demonstrations and students practicing safe riding techniques. But because of the pandemic, parents drove up, signed a waiver, and a sanitized bicycle and wrapped helmet were loaded in their car.

Ponderosa's principal, Chad Gerity, shared: "If you want to work with Wish for Wheels or try and replicate what they do, it takes corporate sponsorships. To really make it work, the planning needs to happen six months (or more) before each 'give away.' The planning includes not only securing the funding for the bicycles and helmets, identifying dates for the 'build' and 'give away,' but also organizing the staff and volunteers."

Moving forward, the hope is for Ponderosa students to be able to ride their bikes to school, practice riding their bikes in P.E. class and at recess. Staff also want students to use their bicycles to talk about math, as a tool for science, and as a subject for writing.

Summer Food Service Program Meadow Point Elementary School Aurora, CO



In summer 2019, Meadow Point Elementary School was one of three Cherry Creek schools to pilot and host a summer food service program. This program ran from May through July, Monday through Friday, from 11-1. The service provided daily lunches at no cost to children 18 and younger and a small fee for adults. The lunches included a main entree, fresh fruits, vegetables, and milk. In addition to the summer lunch program, Meadow Point also offered a summer market. The summer market let Cherry Creek School District (CCSD) families shop for fresh produce and a variety of pantry staples at no extra cost.

Meadow Point is a Title I school, with over 54% of students eligible for free and reduced lunches. Many of the families are on a fixed income, which adds a financial and emotional strain on families over the summer when students can't receive meals at school.



Because of the pilot's success in CCSD, the Summer Food Service Program was able to continue and grow during the difficult times of COVID-19. As the school year turned to remote learning, the district felt it was crucial to still provide students with school lunches. In the beginning, lunch was distributed Monday through Friday and then changed to a Monday, Wednesday, Friday distribution to lessen interaction and allow social distancing. Breakfasts were also added.



On distribution days, kids received two days' worth of breakfasts and lunches at a time along with fresh produce Friday's where they received frozen yogurt and an extra bag of produce. On average, 250-300 children received meals through this program.

Meadow Point's family engagement liaisons, Joei Sayers, shares: "Some days, this job tugs at my heartstrings and it pushes me to do more other days my heart is full of joy because I know our hard work is paying off and I know we have been a blessing to someone."

Sayers continues: "I have been told by many parents that the summer lunches lightened the burden of providing those daily meals and it was immensely appreciated. I personally wanted to see how the program was benefiting our district's families, so I stopped in for lunch a few times over the summer with my children and the turnout was always great. The families also loved the addition of shopping at the summer market and the fact that there was fresh produce all at no extra cost."



Lead, Love, and Learn at Westgate

Westgate Elementary School

Lakewood, CO



Westgate Elementary School's mission is to Lead, Love, and Learn. With that in mind, the staff at Westgate work with families to further student learning. Welcoming families from the start of the school year begins with making the connections with families and students. From in-person registration to a Kindergarten Ice Cream social, families are a main part of Westgate Elementary's school culture.

This partnership with families played a part in the transition to distance learning when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Westgate. Staff at Westgate were able to provide students with the technology needed to complete their distance learning from home. Not only did staff help to provide technology, but the Westgate Food and Clothing Pantry provided necessities for families, such as shelf-stable groceries.

Teachers and administration tracked student learning and worked with families to help support students. Families were able to trade in technology that was not working properly or pick up paper packets for students that were having a harder time with distance learning. The Kindergarten team at Westgate made packets for students that found distance learning hard. Families could also pick-up crafts, fun reading activities, and free books outside the school's front doors.

During this time, the Family Engagement Liaison created a Virtual Spring Break to take students to places from the comfort of their home. Students chose from two destinations each day and connected with other families on social media about where they went and what they did. Westgate's social media post was filled with students taking the Virtual Spring Break to another level by bringing in props from home into their posted pictures. Families traveled with their students and got to enjoy museums, volcanoes, the Great Barrier Reef, and even two New Wonders of the World.

With support from Westgate staff, 376 Westgate students (87.5%) participated in JeffCo's distance learning in the first week alone. Without the efforts of building teacher/student and teacher/parent relationships from the very beginning, the transition to distance learning may not have gone as smoothly. Teachers and staff were available to communicate and answer questions for both students and parents.

Teachers kept a personal touch at Westgate by writing notes to students, creating an uplifting video in answer to student messages written in chalk at the school, visiting students at a safe distance just to say 'hello,' and creating videos for fifth grade and Kindergarten in place of continuation.

COVID-19 Personalized Phone Calls Home

Denver Public Schools

Denver, CO



In Denver Public Schools (DPS), the office of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) fosters a school community that is educated, engaged, and empowered to share the responsibility in creating thriving schools where Every Child Succeeds.

As COVID-19 emerged through our DPS communities, the district wanted to provide additional support. Like many districts, staff began to send surveys to families about how the district and schools could better assist during this time as well as provide food and technology for students. School-based staff made an extra effort to call, text, or email families to see if they needed any further support. At times, however, there was still no response or schools did not have the capacity to do this outreach. Common themes from these surveys and data from school staff led to the realization that schools needed the extra capacity to connect families directly to resources as well as to make additional efforts to attempt to reach families who were not engaging in remote learning.

In the midst of the pandemic, DPS Superintendent Susana Cordova and the FACE office led and assisted in completing individualized calls from central office staff to make sure that families understood that as a district we are here to connect and provide any needed resources to them. The Assessment, Reporting and Data Support and Impact Office provided family contact information from schools who sent data about who they reached, who they were not able to reach, and those that needed the extra level of engagement. FACE staff created a google form where staff members would fill out information of all families contacted and what resources were requested from each of the families. In each call, central office staff made sure that families understood what resources were available internally and externally, connected them if requested, and reiterated to families to not hesitate to call back in the future if they are in need of any resources.

As FACE staff continue to call families individually, families express gratitude and shock that district staff are calling to check on their wellbeing. In these calls, many families say they appreciate having the opportunity to talk to someone about how they are feeling or asking questions not related to education. Some family members have also shared some of their hardships on how they are struggling to make ends meet. Many of the families continue to ask what next year will look like. The FACE staff understand that a lot of these questions are still up in the air, but it is their duty to make sure all families feel supported and heard.

A FACE staff member shares: “As we continue walking families through these unprecedented times, it is very critical for us to continue open lines of communication and a deep foundation in collaboration across DPS departments, educators, and families to understand the current realities of our community. We understand that families engage in different and meaningful ways which is why we are documenting all of the feedback we are receiving from families and providing it to district leadership. As the FACE department, we hope that these personalized engagement calls help us bridge that connection between school and home for the student’s future success!”

Virtual Home Visits

ACTION Zone, Aurora Public Schools

Aurora, CO



The model used by the Zone within the Aurora Public Schools system focuses on addressing family and community needs through community partnerships, 2-generation supports, and family advocacy initiatives. In response to the pandemic, staff needed to quickly and deeply understand what students and families were experiencing. The leaders and the staff in the Zone also wanted to ensure they maintained relationships and trust with families during this time and be able to inform community partners of needs as they arose. The ACTION Zone team needed a way to gather this information through a streamlined but relationship-centered approach and thus developed a Virtual Home Visit (VHV) program.

The design and development of the VHV program was spearheaded by the members of the Office of Autonomous Schools (OAS) team, including five school-based Community School Coordinators. District and school staff collaborated with the mental health team, counselors, nurses, teachers, and Community Health Navigators with the Community School Coordinators taking the lead role as trainers of other staff on implementing the program. Because educators were stretched thin by the new demands, schools relied on classified staff, such as paraprofessionals, attendance liaisons and campus monitors to be the primary conductors of the VHVs.

OAS staff conducted a Virtual Home Visit training for Community School Coordinators, who then trained the staff at their individual school sites to reach out to families by phone or virtual platform. The “dialers” conducting the calls received scripts and support centered around relationship and trust building as well as a database to capture the information that they gathered. The data collected included a social-emotional check-in as well as questions about basic needs that a family could use support with. These databases then served as the basis for an accompanying referral system, which other school, district, and community partners staff were able to access in order to get families the resources they needed as quickly as possible. The dialers conducted two rounds of outreach throughout April and May and, over the course of this two month period, made 3,668 connections resulting in 232 applications for rental assistance, 687 referrals to Community School Coordinators and 170 referrals to Community Health Navigators at Children’s Hospital.

The data collected through the trackers was invaluable for understanding the unique needs in each community. Beyond the referrals themselves, the data helped inform a variety of initiatives in the community, including food distribution system for undocumented families, digital literacy support for families, and a surge in funder support that enabled the procurement of hotspots and computers as well as the hiring of multi-lingual community navigators to support immigrant families. Another auxiliary but significant impact of the program was the mindset shift that was experienced by the dialers themselves. Many of these staff members had limited experience interacting with families prior to the VHV program and shared a shift in their understanding of the roles of families in school.

ACTION Zone’s Director of Community Schools, Family Advocacy & Community Engagement believes that the foundations of the program itself could be applied to any school or geography with some analysis of need.

Food Outreach Champions

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



In the days immediately after Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) closed due to COVID-19, district staff created and coordinated a team of outreach champions to support families who, for a variety of reasons, could not leave their homes during the crisis. This team included many of BVSD's community liaisons and an assortment of teachers, principals, front office staff, and community volunteers.

The project was initially intended to be a one-day event over Spring Break. Staff knew the Emergency Food Distribution was shutting down for 12 days, meaning some families would not be able to provide food to their children. The Equity and Partnerships team collaborated with the BVSD Food Services department and the district foundation, Impact on Education, to offer a day for a designated school representative to pick up food bags and gift cards for families who were unable to leave their homes.

Little did district staff know that one day would turn into an ongoing service to families who fell victim to the many challenging effects caused by COVID-19. Since that day in mid-March, every Tuesday and Thursday, dozens of BVSD staff members hit the road, picking up food, books and supplies, then safely hand-delivered the items to the doorsteps of the district's most vulnerable families.

Due to a generous outpouring of community organizations, BVSD outreach champions are now able to offer even more resources when they visit homes. Outreach champions can now offer even more resources, including bringing books, ensuring families have Internet, providing personal care products, and giving art supplies to students and families.

When summer break commenced, it was uplifting to discover that so many of the delivery champions were interested in continuing to serve over the vacation. BVSD was able to compensate them for their time and reimburse them for their mileage. Staff also added a few volunteers from the community to the summer team to ensure that they were meeting the needs of families from all participating schools throughout this challenging time.

In the end, it is not just the resources that the outreach champions bring to families. It is also the value of seeing a person who cares about them and sharing a face-to-face interaction - from a distance. When they are going to the doorsteps and safely interacting with families, they are an ear to better support teachers and principals and other staff. They are able to garner better insight to help everyone better fill voids.

BVSD's Director of Equity and Partnerships shares: "These porch conversations will sometimes give us a more candid view of what families truly need. There is something different that happens when we let go of the position of power that we inhabit when we ask families to come to us. When we are standing on a family's porch, they feel more comfortable to speak candidly and transparently about what is going well, what they need and what could better help them and their children during these unprecedented times."

PEDAL Forums

Westminster Public Schools

Westminster, CO



Westminster Public Schools (WPS) serves a diverse group of approximately 9,000 students in 18 schools, including three Early Learning Centers, five elementary schools, two middle schools, four innovation PK-8 schools, four magnet PK-8 schools, one comprehensive high school, and one alternative high school. The district also houses the Westminster Virtual Academy (K-12) and a day treatment program. Students are characterized by significant socioeconomic challenges, a high rate of mobility, homelessness, and English language barriers. The majority of students are Hispanic (76%), most qualify for free or reduced lunch (78%), 39% are English learners, and 12% identified with special needs.

In the 2009-10 school year, WPS elected to move from a traditional system of schooling toward an innovative approach referred to as *competency-based education*. The entire school district from preschool through grade 12, including the innovation and magnet schools, is organized around engaging learners with skills necessary for today's workforce, instructing students at their developmental instructional levels, and advancing *only* when they have demonstrated competency--or mastery--of each concept and skill.

The PEDAL—Programming for Every Driven and Accelerated Learner—Leadership Team implemented weekly virtual *PEDAL Forums* (one for parents and another separate one for students) during the final 10 weeks of spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Forum participants represented schools across the district and students from primary to the high school level.

The main purpose of these forums was to engage families in helping children with high abilities to remain engaged, motivated, and successful in their learning, regardless of the learning environment. Topics include but are not limited to: social-emotional learning, using the district's Empower platform to enhance student learning of specific interests and aptitudes, post-secondary options, and sharing other relevant topics related to gifted education (e.g., PEDAL identification, perfectionism, summer and other community offerings). Discussion topics were largely determined by what the parents and students wanted to discuss, so it was truly owned by them, though facilitated by staff.

Through these forums, valuable relationships formed between families, students, and WPS staff.

Westminster's PEDAL Coordinator shared: "We believe parents can support their children better because of this work. We also feel students have become more knowledgeable and stronger advocates for their needs."

The PEDAL Coordinator continued: "If I were to offer advice to those wishing to replicate this practice, I would suggest the following: (a) stick with consistent meeting times, (b) use the same video conference (Zoom) link weekly, (c) send a reminder to both parents and students the night before to enhance participation consistency and (d) be creative in how content stays fresh and interesting through guest speakers, home projects, discussion topics on current affairs, break-out sessions, and so on. Also, due to the time it takes to plan high-quality sessions (including coordination of guest speakers), it might also be helpful to consider a bi-weekly schedule. For the 2020-21 school year, consider offering the same sessions in the evening and in-person to provide flexible options for families. These forums take some work, but it's very well worth it!"

The Digital Divide During COVID

Boulder Valley School District

Boulder, CO



On March 12th, students in Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) were asked to honor the COVID-19 stay at home mandate, and on March 13th, BVSD's IT and Equity and Partnerships Teams jumped into action. It was no secret that hundreds of families in BVSD not only lacked access to technology, but equally crucial, lacked access to the internet. The urgency of connecting families to technology was never so pressing.

The Chief Intelligence Officer used his creativity, leadership, and leveraged his network of community allies to embark on a project unprecedented in the district. Together with a dedicated team of passionate principals, community liaisons, and support staff, BVSD succeeded in connecting close to 1,000 families to the internet and distributed more than 6,000 Chromebook devices to students throughout the district.

Boulder's IT Team collaborated with the Boulder Public Library, who donated 100 hotspots, enabling students to establish an immediate internet connection. Staff network organized a thorough distribution plan through a combination of addressing phone calls to the IT help line, making personal phone calls to families, and responding to teacher feedback about who was not yet attending virtual classes.

In addition to the family outreach effort, IT deepened its partnership with the wireless technology company LiveWire. Boulder was able to strike a win/win situation with the company, allowing it to mount signal antennas on a variety of schools in the district in exchange for free internet to free/reduced lunch qualified families, encompassing 21% of BVSD's population. Those families who were within reach of the internet signal set up appointments directly with LiveWire and are now able to access the internet, some for the first time ever. This means that students could then participate in Home Learning, and parents could embark on a journey of learning about technology and digital literacy. BVSD revealed one silver lining under the dire COVID circumstances as the district made more headway in narrowing the digital divide in 3 months than it did in the last decade. Staff also acknowledge there is still work to be done.

BVSD also partnered with Comcast to implement and finance the Internet Essentials program and is covering the cost of the first six months' subscription for the families of students receiving free and reduced lunch.

In response to parent challenges of managing various learning platforms, BVSD fielded personal phone calls, went to people's houses to help troubleshoot access issues, and is currently working on creating "how to videos" in Spanish and English for families who are less familiar with technology. Those videos range from "How to login to your Single Sign-On account," to "How to access assignments in Schoology," to "How to login to Infinite Campus."

BVSD also partnered with CU's Renee Crown Institute who sent out surveys to Spanish speaking families. The 120+ responses helped inform teachers and administrators about the successes and challenges families faced and continue to face, both from a personal and an educational/technology standpoint. As a result, the district has been able to provide additional services such as a) a food distribution program, b) childcare for essential workers, c) online Summer Learning support, and d) personal phone calls home.

Graduation Rose Ceremony

Poudre High School

Fort Collins, CO



Poudre High School has the highest Hispanic student enrollment in Poudre School District and hosts a newcomer program. The Graduation Rose Ceremony provides an opportunity for English Language Learners (ELL) students to be recognized for their accomplishments, as well as a space for graduating seniors to thank people in their lives that helped them achieve their academic goals. When this practice began a few years ago, attendance was fairly low. Fast forward to 2019 and it was standing room only in the high school's Events Center.

The ELD Department and counselors take the lead on planning and implementation. They begin by making a list of seniors who at some point in their K-12 education were an ELL. This team asks those students to write a 'thank you' note to any person—teacher, staff, or family member—who helped them achieve their graduation goal. The ELD Department makes a PowerPoint presentation with each student who is going to attend. The PowerPoint includes future plans, awards, recognition, clubs, activities, or anything else that relates to the students' high school career.

Guests who attend the Rose Ceremony includes ELD teachers, other Poudre High School educators, the leadership team, counselors, graduating seniors, and their families. The ELD team calls each student to the stage. The student then picks a rose in a vase and reads the 'thank you' note to their mentor. At the end of the ceremony, attendees enjoy a Tres Leches cake and Ponche. In all, the ceremony lasts about two-and-a-half hours. The first 90-minutes is dedicated to student recognitions and the last hour is all about the celebration!

In addition, younger students have the opportunity to watch the ceremony by video or attend in person. What these younger students see are their older peers who have faced the same struggles, some even greater than their own, standing in front of an audience proudly honoring the influential people in their lives. They see and hear about the achievements of ELL students and it plants the seed that they too have what it takes to finish high school.

The ceremony also honors the hard work and sacrifices that parents and relatives have made for their children and highlights the partnership between families and school. Poudre High School families are not always able to attend traditional school events, like Back to School nights and parent teacher conferences, because they are often working many jobs to support their children. That does not mean that they don't care or are not involved in their student's success. This ceremony acknowledges that ALL families are important and gives our English learners a chance to directly say thank you for the support. What better way to support the student outcome of receiving a high school diploma?

Poudre High School's family liaison explains how the Rose Ceremony still took place in 2020, despite COVID-19: "We brought two roses to each house of our senior graduates also with a letter from the team in charge of the event. One rose for the student and the other one for who they decide to say thank you. We went in a caravan and toured where our English language learner students reside and enjoyed seeing them with their families celebrating this achievement."

Parent Online Learning Support

North Middle School Health Sciences and Technology

Aurora, CO



As the world learned about the COVID-19 pandemic schools worldwide were among the first to close. North Middle School (NMS), just like all schools, faced so many uncertainties, yet their team quickly formed a plan to augment the streams of communication and offer technology support.

As NMS transitioned online, the staff felt concern about whether or not families would know they could still rely on the school for support. Teachers utilized apps like Talkingpts.org to text individual parents in different languages and leadership sent a whole-school weekly communication via email, phone and text. When teachers were unable to get ahold of a student, administration continued to make the calls. At times, staff would contact all members of the household to find a student. Staff also posted the family liaison's work cell phone number on the school's website and office staff checked the school voicemail daily.

Once staff made contact with the families, it was clear that they needed to be more concise with all the information that we were sending to families and find an easier way to share it. Therefore, North's family liaison created a [Youtube video](#) that showed an overview of how to help students' login, monitor their progress, and what to expect to see in the online platform. The liaison then posted the video on North's Facebook page and texted the video to all families.

After making the first video, the liaison made another one to help parents [utilize their mobile hotspot](#). The next step was to make sure that staff offered parents an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback about how the school could improve online learning support. To begin this dialogue, NMS hosted a couple of virtual coffee chats with parents, the principal, the administrative team, and counselors.

Counselors answered questions and offered parental advice to support students through this difficult time. The virtual coffee chat also encouraged staff to listen to parents' concerns and then to take action. One theme was that families wanted to take a more active role in their student's learning. As a result, staff helped parents create their own account for their student's online learning on Edgenuity. This way parents could see if they were on track with their learning and how much time they spent logged in. During the coffee chats staff also learned about immediate needs and parents were able to offer their support to each other.

One of those immediate needs were groceries. North's family liaison, Margarita Alamillo Barrios, had been in contact with the non-profit organization *We Don't Waste*, and promptly planned a food drive-thru in the school's parking lot. *We Don't Waste* took care of the entire operation and distributed close to 300 food boxes. Barrios explains: "We are very thankful that we had the opportunity to make this connection between *We Don't Waste* and our community. Although *We Don't Waste* offers support in many areas of Colorado, it was very helpful and convenient for our families to be able to find them in a familiar space."

Barrios continued: "Although the pandemic seemed to have abruptly driven us away from each other in many ways we grew closer and stronger as a community. We were able to go outside of the regular methods to reach our families and make more connections."

COVID Case Management Team

Fort Lewis College

Durango, CO



Fort Lewis College has an incredibly unique and beautifully diverse student population. With this comes very specific needs that especially needed to be addressed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of this practice was to create a safe and knowledgeable team of people to help support students affected by the pandemic with housing resources, navigating financial resources, food, aiding in access to medication, internet access, and connecting them with physical and mental healthcare.

As a Native American serving institution, Fort Lewis staff also helped students navigate the needs of their communities and what resources were available. With the severe COVID-19 hit to the Navajo Nation and the many reservations the students are from, staff wanted to make sure they were able to support them in a myriad of ways.

While many individuals played a big role in the success of this program, it was the brainchild of the Fort Lewis College student affairs director, Jeff Dupont. He sought out expertise in case management and tasked Kate Suazo with being the team lead. Suazo's team is made up of people from all over the college who worked collaboratively to make sure each student received as much support as they needed. The team also collaborated with several community partners in Durango, including the local food bank and housing resources.

The team created a form that was sent to students, staff, and faculty where the individual could provide a snapshot of their needs and concerns. The form was accessible everyone, even if they did not have internet access. Once the form came in, the team analyzed the information and assigned the request to one of seven case managers. That individual would introduce themselves to the student and help them determine the way in which the team could provide support.

Along the way, the first priority was creating a relationship with the student, allowing them to feel safe and seen. The Fort Lewis campus is incredibly student-centered. Suazo explains: "We allowed students to tell us what they needed, while also giving them the space to let us take the lead if they were overwhelmed. We met students where they were. This included mode of communication, assistance with different needs, and just being available for a check-in. We began to notice that word of mouth was our best way of getting students interested in requesting support from this program. What made this successful was relationship-building. Reminding students that they had a network of support on campus and in the community, we were there to just walk the journey with them."

This program needs to have a balance between relationship-building and resource-providing. If students are just given a list of resources, they might feel overwhelmed and not follow through. By having a solid relationship and creating trust, the student can navigate those resources based on their needs. Students are incredibly resilient; sometimes they just need a mentor to walk alongside them. One case manager shared: "My student said that she was two hours away from dropping out when she received my email, she felt it was a sign that she had help and wasn't alone."

Title I Collective/Parent Leadership Teams

Greeley Evans School District 6

Greeley, CO



The goal of the Title I Collective and the Parent Leadership Team (PLT) practice was to have more parents, especially Title I school parents, have open discussions about the district and learn how to be more involved with district staff. While all parents were welcome to attend the Parent Leadership Team, District 6 staff wanted to make sure that all of the districts' populations were represented.

Parent recruitment consisted primarily of personal invitations. District 6's Title I Specialist, Janet Navarro Perez, started with families who attended other events at the Family Center. These are families who previously attended Strengthening Families courses and sewing classes. Perez also invited parents from five Title I PLT schools—four elementary schools and one middle school.



Perez explains: "My goal was to get as many parents to attend as possible. I personally called each parent myself and told them about the event. I had other team members from the Family Center help me by giving me names and numbers of parents they worked with, and I then called them and told them they were referred by the certain team member."

The personal outreach paid off; 17 new families attended the first Title I Collective/PLT meeting! Each participating school also had a group of teachers, administrators, and counselors. Having school staff also on the team was critical because it ensured that parent leadership would continue in their individual buildings.

Unfortunately, the Title I Collective was only able to meet three times before COVID-19 forced schools to close. However, Family Center staff remained in contact with the families during stay at home orders. Perez shares: "I know there has been positive school improvements and more involvement with some of the parents since because parents would ask me to help them get in touch with certain teachers when they could not get ahold of them during the online learning process. I also had a lot of parents tell me that they really enjoyed these meetings because they had never attended anything like them, and it made them feel more involved and able to speak up about any problems they are having with their children's schools."

For those looking to form their own parent leadership teams, consistency and persistence is key! Perez shared: "Even if you have to feel like you're being annoying or bothering too much, sometimes that is what they need to see so families know that you really want them there. After so many calls to the same parents, a lot of them already know me and feel comfortable having a conversation with me when I call."

