

The Hollys Amazing Team

Holly Ridge & Holly Hills Elementary Schools

Denver, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education



Holly Hills Elementary and Holly Ridge Elementary, both members of the Cherry Creek School District, have partnered with families to improve child welfare by providing resources and guidance to facilitate and improve learning, development, and health of students. This practice has proven to be very effective in establishing communications with families to accomplishing these goals.

School administrators, including the Coordinator of Community and Family Connections, working through the various Family Liaisons, implement the program by honoring and supporting the parent-child relationships that are central to a child's development, school readiness, and wellbeing. Specifically, this is accomplished by continuous communication with participating families to provide resources and information in the areas of food and employment assistance, healthcare, housing, and emergency services. Effective family engagement also facilitates the safety, trust, encouragement and caring that affect the wellbeing of both child and family.

Family Liaisons, along with the social worker, psychologist, and counselors identify families who can benefit from the services provided. By assisting families with these basic needs, the learning experience for the students is enhanced. This provides students with added security and enables them to perform better in the classroom. As a result, participating students can concentrate on learning and the educational experience is improved for the school as a whole. The practice is evaluated through monthly meetings with the head of the family liaisons by reviewing specific situations, asking questions, offering suggestions and ideas, and helping one another.



A few challenges arose in the implementation of this project. The biggest challenge this year was lack of face-to-face interaction. Communication options were limited primarily to telephone calls, email, or texting. Food assistance was difficult, but thanks to various food banks, it was accomplished by drive-through pick up services. The school personnel will forever appreciate and cherish the partnership with students and families throughout the difficult 20-21 school year.

Suggestions and advice for replication of the practice include the review and development of detailed job descriptions as well as a clear organizational structure and reporting hierarchy for liaisons. This, along with the development of best practices guidelines and protocols regarding working and communicating with students and parents, will assist liaisons in performing up to expectations. Liaisons should be provided with staff lists, room assignments and school maps to enable more efficient performance of their assignments.