

Principal Chats

Greeley Evans School District 6

Greeley, CO



The goal of the Principal Chats was to create an open system by providing families with monthly opportunities to meet with the principal and school leadership to discuss topics, initiatives, and issues related to student learning at the school level. This connected to the goal Greeley-Evans District 6 (D6) set in collaboration with the Colorado Education Initiative (CEI) – to design and develop a comprehensive plan during the 2021-22 school year that will strengthen family partnerships.

Those involved varied by school but typically included a team of educators, staff members, family members, and community representatives. This varied group enabled the planning process to benefit from the collective perspectives they brought. One of the primary goals of the Principal Chats was to really hear from the families to identify common themes and design a family engagement program focused on what parents want and need. The practice also sought to build strong networks among families and communities and support families to develop and assert their role as leaders and agents of change.

Monthly chats provided a space for families to get to know the school administration and bring forward concerns and questions. The chats also aimed to build families' understanding of how the school system worked. Questions to families included: 1) Are your needs being met? 2) Are you comfortable attending events? 3) Are you able to communicate more with your child's teacher? and 4) Do you know about our key resources? The meeting format utilized both structure and openness to allow families to feel heard and understood. The chats also included topics families had previously expressed interest in. For example, Bella Romero Academy families expressed interest in both how they could better talk to their children about their feelings and accessing ESL support for parents.

The Principal Chats were evaluated through feedback from school staff and parents. Some schools also utilized family engagement surveys to better explore the needs and preferred topics of their families. This process helped the district gain a better understanding of the needs of the community. Families also hoped to continue the chats as well as participate in future opportunities. The success of the chats signaled a need for the district to continue making connections with families in different ways and to start seeing the leadership potential in all families.

Any district who wishes to utilize this program should have set goals for what the school needs to build trusting relationships with families. Purpose can include helping children and families, creating more enjoyment and learning, creating new opportunities for students to connect, or building open communication systems with families. Outreach is the X-factor that will make or break your Principal Chat efforts. How you connect with parents and caregivers leading up to and between the chats will shape what happens during these gatherings, and how these gatherings are perceived throughout the school community. Thorough planning will greatly support increased family engagement attendance.