

# Cooking Matters for Families

Kullerstrand Elementary School

Wheat Ridge, CO



Staff at Kullerstrand Elementary school are always looking for opportunities to collaborate with families and other members of the school community in ways that are innovative, inclusive, and beneficial to student growth. When the Family Engagement Liaison found a program that did this and incorporated three of the six National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, the entire school was truly excited and interested. Cooking Matters for Families created an opportunity for families to actively participate in a school activity, to collaborate in student learning and healthy development at home and school, and to collaborate with community members to connect students and families with expanded learning opportunities.

Cheryl Clay, principal at Kullerstrand Elementary, regularly looks for ways to enhance experiences and programs for the Kullerstrand families. As a result, she encouraged Tim Weaver, Family Liaison at Kullerstrand, to pursue a collaboration with Cooking Matters. Mr. Weaver worked with Elizabeth Alden at Cooking Matters to go through the necessary steps to bring the course into the school. After a few weeks, all of the agreements and initiatives were in place and Cooking Matters for Families was offered to the families at Kullerstrand.

Since its inception, Cooking Matters for Families has been providing direct education to empower families to stretch their food budgets, make healthy choices and cook delicious meals at home. There were 10 groups, consisting of one parent and one student, who met for two hours each Monday evening at Kullerstrand (with one field trip to King Soopers), from February 25<sup>th</sup> through April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The classes were taught by a volunteer chef and nutrition educator. Lessons covered meal preparation, grocery shopping, food budgeting and nutrition. Participants practiced fundamental food skills, proper knife techniques, reading ingredient labels, and making a healthy meal for a family of four on a \$10 budget. Families took home a bag of groceries after each class so they could practice the recipes taught that day!

Cooking Matters conducted a survey of participants and an evaluation of the course at the conclusion of the final class. Comments from families reflected the success of the class: “added good healthy options for the family;” “positive thinking, eating healthy;” “the class was so much fun;” “I like this class a lot, the instructor was awesome;” and “we are confident in letting our son into the kitchen to prepare foods on his own. When we had the flu he was able to make food for himself!”

One major challenge of making sure families attended regularly was actually easy to resolve due to the fact that the families were having so much fun and learning valuable skills.

Kullerstrand’s liaison states: “My advice for any school looking to engage in Cooking Matters for Families would be to recruit families well before the start of the first class, stress the importance of attendance, point out the great bonding created in the kitchen between the adult and student, and make sure that everyone knows that this is FUN, FUN, FUN!! The Cooking Matters organization is amazing, thorough, professional, and I recommend them wholeheartedly!!”