

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.