

Colorado's Promising Partnership Practices

Skyway Elementary's Book Zone

Description/Summary

Nestled in the southwest corner of Colorado Springs lies Skyway Elementary School, the only Title I school in Cheyenne Mountain District 12. We are grateful and fortunate to have additional licensed staff who can support those students requiring additional intervention to address their skill deficits. Teachers collaborate to strategically plan interventions that aim to close the achievement gap and ignite a powerful love of literacy. Last year, Intervention teachers Clare Prystup and Amy Babcock launched the "Book Zone" to further support student interest in reading both at school and at home.

How Does the Book Zone Work?

Donated books from a nearby school are shared with students who can take 5 at a time and upon return, exchange them for new ones. Unlike a library, fines are not issued if a book is lost or damaged, but students are encouraged to swap out their books, unless it is one they cannot part with and will reread. Clare and Amy call these "forever books" and often gift additional books for students' home libraries. Students are encouraged to visit the Book Zone as often as possible, and they take pride in enjoying their own library, set aside only for Title I students.

Incorporating "Old Time Technology"

In an effort to support student opportunities to listen to fluent reading, Clare and Amy have collected several CD and cassette players with headphones that students can borrow. While teachers always have to explain what a CD or cassette player is, students feel like they have something special to show their families when they take them home. Although students are more used to sharing smartphones with their family members, they are excited to show them something "from when you were little" that they can use to listen to stories that accompany their books.



Amy Babcock, left, & Clare Prystup, right

Skyway Elementary Website
<http://skyway.cmsd12.org>

Engaging Parents

The Book Zone and at-home listening centers are just two examples of ways parents are engaged by our Title I team at Skyway, but there are other opportunities for parental inclusion as well. An annual Meet & Greet at the beginning of the year introduces parents to the support program, and they learn strategies to use at home to help further reading. The Family Holiday Lunch always fills the gym with students and their parents in an effort to celebrate all the reading progress demonstrated by students. Aside from frequent teacher emails and newsletters, literacy is also supported through the Read Anywhere Challenge by encouraging students to read books or other items from different genres (newspaper articles, recipes, magazines, etc.) in multiple environments - the car, kitchen, under a shady tree, at the zoo...the location options are endless.

Building a Bridge from School to Home

Parent involvement at Skyway Elementary School involves many facets of purposefully connecting school to home, and literacy has grown to be the perfect bridge. Students and parents can engage as much or as little as works for them because of other home and work commitments. The Book Zone is just a small piece of a bigger puzzle that connects our school home to their "real" home, and students are reaping the benefits of how we are all fitting together!