

The Backpack Program

Delta County School District 50J

Delta, CO



The Backpack Program was founded in 1992 through a collaboration between the administration of Delta County School District and Early Childhood professionals to forge a new concept around bringing the Delta County parents of children ages 3-5 additional resources for their learners. The result was a unique home-based preschool program that supports families as the first and most important teacher in their children's lives.

Each item in the Backpack box was specifically chosen to build and broaden strong literacy skills centered on phonemic awareness, vocabulary, letter naming, and active engagement. Each box also includes appropriate materials to develop the child's fine and gross motor skills, their problem solving skills, and their creativity. The backpack boxes provide play with a purpose and encourage active parental involvement in their child's early development.

The program has over 600 boxes each with one of fifty eight themes that are of high interest to the target population of children ages 3-5 years old. The boxes are checked out to each family using a similar system to any library checkout procedure. Families are instructed to use and care for the box. Upon return of the box, the Backpack staff cleans, inventories, and restocks each individual box taking care with each item to ensure safe, usable items for the next family checking out the box. Checklists and suggestion sheets are included with each box to guide each family with ideas that support child development, academic, and social success. Each theme is aligned with the Colorado Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education.

Through a partnership with Delta County Schools, the Backpack Program has been able to track and link student success of Backpack participants through state standardized testing at 3rd grade since 1997. These yearly assessments have consistently shown that a higher percentage of children who was in involved in the Backpack Program at ages 3-5 scores fall in Advanced/Proficient than students who did not participate in the Backpack Program. These longitudinal outcomes support that family-school-community partnerships do impact student academic success!

In addition to these studies, the Backpack Program has begun looking at juniors in high school and ACT/SAT scores in relationship to involvement in the Backpack Program as a 3-5 year old. These reports also indicate that students who were a part of the program as a preschooler scored higher on these standardized tests than students who did not participate.