

Welcoming All Families into the School Community

Foster Elementary School

Arvada, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

WELCOMING ALL FAMILIES

“Welcoming All Families into the School Community” was designed to promote the engagement of all families at Foster Elementary School, including middle-income families who enroll students in the school’s dual-language program as a result of school choice, families with English Language Learners (ELL), and families experiencing generational poverty. Foster Elementary has a diverse student population, with 41% of students identified as ELL, 66% participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program, and 32% using the school choice option to participate in the dual-language program. School staff have had to tailor engagement practices to their diverse student and family population in order to create a welcoming environment for all families.

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES

The principal at Foster Elementary has been using a variety of family-school partnership practices in order to equally and equitably engage all family demographics. For example, headphones are used at many meetings for simultaneous translation; headphones offer Spanish during English-speaking meetings, while English language headphones are offered during Spanish-led meetings. The principal believes having meetings in Spanish provides an opportunity for English-speaking parents to better understand the challenges that mono-lingual Spanish speakers face in their efforts to be involved in their children’s education.

A Title I liaison is funded by Jefferson County School District to discuss how Spanish speakers can be better engaged in their children’s education. The position focuses on relationship building with the diverse families served by Foster Elementary School.

Additionally, the school’s principal requests that parents address her informally, by using her first name. Staff are given the same option, but are allowed to choose how they prefer to be addressed. Informal attire is worn by Heister and the Foster Elementary staff to send a visual cue that she and her staff are approachable to the entire school community.

WELCOMING FAMILIES SUCCESSES

Heister and her staff are increasing the likelihood that parents will be active participants in their children’s education by creating a welcoming environment for all families on a daily basis. Foster Elementary staff understand the importance of personalized connections and the positive long-term impact the family-partnership practices have on their students.