



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education



# FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS P-12 FRAMEWORK: USER'S GUIDE

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PARTNERSHIPS

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## Table of Contents

A Note from the Office of Family, School, and Community Partnerships.....	3
P-12 Family, School, and Community Partnerships Framework.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Understanding the Rubric.....	6
Rubric Description.....	6
What do Excelling Programs look like?.....	6
Using this Rubric.....	8
Rubric Organization.....	9
FSCP Rubric Summary Worksheet.....	22
Engaging in Guided Reflection and Discussion.....	23
The FSCP Collaborative Case Stories.....	28
Endnotes.....	44





## A Note from the Office of Family, School, and Community Partnerships

I am thrilled to share with all of you this User's Guide to accompany the Preschool-12th Grade Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP) Framework. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Office of Family, School, and Community Partnerships, P-3 Office, and Office of Learning Supports co-developed this document with assistance from Dr. Steven B. Sheldon. The purpose of this User's Guide is to offer educators a vision of partnership programs and a way to evaluate their site's efforts to engage the families and community of their students.

The journey to create Colorado's P-12 FSCP Framework began in June 2018. Three offices with the CDE joined a cohort with nine other states from across the country, each of whom had the goal of writing their own state framework. Over the course of 18-months, CDE staff worked with district leaders, school staff, families, and community partners from across the state to gather input about how Colorado can cultivate and sustain partnerships linked to positive student outcomes. Four themes emerged, which became the Framework's Essential Elements:

- Create an Inclusive Culture.
- Build Trusting Relationships.
- Design Capacity-Building Opportunities.
- Dedicate Necessary Resources.

Our hope is that this User's Guide can help early childhood programs, districts, and schools to bring the P-12 FSCP Framework to life at their sites and in their communities. We are confident that using these resources as suggested, with the recommended stakeholders, will lead to more systemic, sustainable, and effective FSCP, yielding positive academic and behavioral student outcomes.

Your friends at the Colorado Department of Education look forward to helping you on your journey and seeing the progress you make toward more equitable family, school, and community partnerships.

In Partnership,

***Darcy Hutchins, Ph.D.***

Director of Family, School, and Community Partnerships  
Colorado Department of Education

# P-12 Family, School, and Community Partnerships Framework

## Family School and Community Partnerships (FSCP)

A Preschool through 12th Grade Guide for Colorado School Districts



FAMILY SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



### Definition:

Families, early childhood programs, schools, and communities actively partnering to develop, implement, and evaluate effective and equitable practices to improve educational outcomes for children and youth.

The below **4 Essential Elements** will help you guide your way.



### Create an Inclusive Culture

## Create an Inclusive Culture

An inclusive culture honors the lived experience of families in early childhood programs and/or the school community. Self-assess with the following:

- How are your practices inclusive of all families?
- How are you learning about families lived experiences?
- Who is leading and supporting the creation of the welcoming culture?

## Build Trusting Relationships

Trusting relationships enable families and programs/schools to partner about the education outcomes for children and youth. Self-assess with the following:

- What do trusting relationships look like in your program/district/school?
- How are you ensuring effective use of two-way communication with your families to sustain positive relationships?
- How do you leverage relationships with families to achieve your program/district/school goals?



### Build Trusting Relationships



### Design Capacity-Building Opportunities

## Design Capacity Building Opportunities

Capacity building opportunities for staff and families promote shared leadership about educational outcomes for children and youth. Self-assess with the following:

- How do you use the context expertise of families to better your content expertise?
- How are you utilizing the assets of your families in your programs/schools?
- How are you using FSCP as a school improvement strategy?

## Dedicate Necessary Resources

Necessary resources integrate and elevate partnering practices to scale. Self-assess with the following:

- How do you implement evidence-based practices to cultivate and sustain FSCP?
- Where are you now and where will you go?
- How will you continually improve your family partnerships through community-based resources?



### Dedicate Necessary Resources

[FSCP link for statute, research, and promising practices that provide the foundation for these 4 Essential Elements.](#)

## Introduction

For decades, research has demonstrated the important role families play in shaping children’s learning and education. Family engagement in the school, for example, has been connected to higher school levels of academic achievement.<sup>i</sup> Additionally, an extensive body of research has shown that family engagement at home and in the school are associated with higher levels of academic achievement for students,<sup>ii</sup> as well as early childhood outcomes such as school readiness and socio-emotional competences.<sup>iii</sup> Equally important, family engagement has been identified as an essential ingredient necessary for sustained school improvement.<sup>iv</sup>

Despite the abundant evidence linking family, school, and community partnerships to school and student achievement, educators have found it challenging to implement practices that engage families and community partners beyond traditional school-based events such as parent-teacher conferences and back-to-school nights. These efforts have not been able to realize the goals of educational equity and improved academic achievement for students from historically marginalized communities. As a result, numerous researchers have suggested the need to shift our thinking from “hard-to-reach” families to “hard-to-access” schools.<sup>v</sup>

In this spirit, the federal government issued The Dual Capacity-Building Framework<sup>vi</sup> to provide guidance for State Departments of Education and school districts to implement programs of family and community engagement. This framework emphasizes the importance of developing the skills and knowledge of families and educators on the issue of family and community engagement; describes the organizational conditions necessary to facilitate equitable family, school, and community partnerships; and discusses the critical educator and family outcomes that lead to children’s educational outcomes.

To date, few frameworks exist that can guide educators to develop family, school, and community partnership programs with attention to student outcomes and social justice. Traditional frameworks that describe different types of family involvement<sup>vii</sup> have been criticized for being silent on issues of equity.<sup>viii</sup> Additionally, though vital as a resource for K-12 FSCP, The Dual Capacity-Building Framework does not address preschool programs. This rubric presents a vision of family, school, and community partnerships from early childhood education through high school where social justice and equity function to help students succeed in schools.

## Understanding the Rubric

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) rubric about Family, School, and Community Partnership (FSCP) was developed in order to provide schools an image of what effective and high-impact work in this area looks like. Additionally, the rubric is intended to provide a scheme presenting a developmental continuum on which schools and programs can identify their current level of engagement with families and community partners, as well as understand next steps and a path toward more excellent and equitable partnership programs.

### Rubric Description

Building on the Essential Elements of FSCP, this rubric provides educators the ability to conduct a self-assessment and to reflect on their approach to family and community engagement. Kim and Sheridan<sup>ix</sup> discuss how strong programs of family, school, and community partnerships require that schools create organizational structures and norms to support these practices. The Essential Elements and this self-assessment rubric reflect this, providing users the opportunity to systematically examine both aspects of their school's approach to FSCP.

The Family, School, and Community Partnership Office at the CDE developed the Essential Elements to help guide educators' understanding of the characteristics of high-quality partnership programs. Strong programs of FSCP create inclusive cultures, build trusting relationships, design opportunities to build capacity, and dedicate necessary resources to implement and scale-up partnership efforts. Within each of these elements, the CDE offered three questions for educators to use as prompts for reflection.

The Essential Elements Rubric presented in this document provides users a more structured way to reflect on their partnership efforts using a 4-point rating scale across the four elements. For each question within an element, educators can rate their current practices as: Not Working on This, Early or Developing Stage, Proficient, or Excelling. These rating levels are intended to be developmental, with each successive level building on the one prior.

### What do Excelling Programs look like?

According to Epstein and Sheldon,<sup>x</sup> the purpose of implementing programs of family, school, and community partnerships should be to promote and help realize equity within our educational system, alongside attention to improving student outcomes. This was a guiding principal in the development of this self-assessment rubric. As a result, the description of excelling programs across the Essential Elements include, among other qualities, a commitment to educational equity.

Schools with excelling programs will demonstrate high levels of implementation across several domains that research has shown to be predictive of strong FSCP programs that drive important outcomes.

These domains include:

- **School and program leadership** – Studies indicate that principals and other school or program leaders (i.e., childcare center directors) are critical to the successful implementation of FSCP programs. Educational leaders do this by promoting a vision and norms supporting partnerships and by allocating resources (human, financial, and material) for family, school partnerships.<sup>xi</sup>
- **Attention to inequities** – Successful school and program implementation of FSCP are those that attend to the everyday realities and challenges faced by traditionally-underserved families.
- **Giving voice and sharing power** - Studies indicate that effective partnership programs understand the unequal power dynamics that exist in traditional school-home relationships, where school needs drive the interactions. Excelling programs are characterized by systems that strive to give all families voice in setting the partnership agenda and maintain attention on the need to ensure that all families from all groups in the school and program community are represented on school and program decision making committees.<sup>xii</sup>
- **Programmatic approach, not events** – Family, school, and community partnerships are more than a collection of events. Sustainable and effective efforts are part of a systemic effort that is integrated into the regular organizational routines of schools, early childhood programs and districts. Additionally, partnerships programs need to move beyond school-based events to include curricular and other practices that take place in families' homes and communities.<sup>xiii</sup>
- **Teamwork & shared leadership** – Site leadership is critical, but the most successful programs facilitate leadership from a variety of sources. Family, school, and community partnerships are more likely to be sustained when the power to plan and implement practices is shared among administrators, teachers, families, and community partners. In the secondary schools, successful programs empower students to provide leadership by asking them about their perceptions and preferences related to the involvement of their families in their schooling.<sup>xiv</sup>
- **Evaluation** – Program evaluations serve two purposes, to demonstrate results and to foster improvements. Sites that do not engage families and teachers in a process to collect feedback on partnership practices are not positioning themselves to improve the way they serve students and their families. Strong programs use the goals they set to guide partnership practices as an anchor for their evaluation practices.<sup>xv</sup>

## Using the Rubric

The self-assessment rubric in this user's guide was developed with the goal of helping early childhood and K-12 educators (heretofore referred to as "site") understand their family, school, and community partnership efforts in relation to the research-based ideals that the CDE wants all constituents to meet. To that end, this rubric and user's guide can provide sites a tool to evaluate their partnership programs and help structure reflective thinking about strengths, weakness, and ways to improve.

Sites are encouraged to use the self-assessment rubric collaboratively. Rather than having a single person rate the site on each question within the Essential Elements, we encourage sites to put together a small group of individuals who bring different perspectives of the school, program, or district to the evaluation process.

The benefits of this tool can only be realized if the feedback provided is honest. To foster honest feedback, we suggest asking individuals to complete the self-assessment in private and to have no identifying information on the assessment. It is important to recognize the power dynamics that exist between principals and teachers, teachers and families, as well as administrators/teachers and students. Also, make the ratings anonymous so that your participants will feel more comfortable giving feedback if they feel a lower rating is warranted.

Finally, we suggest using this self-assessment several times. The first time you evaluate your site with this measure, consider it a baseline assessment or starting point. Look at the Essential Elements collectively and separately. The collective rating will provide you an overall picture of how systematic, goal-focused, and equity-oriented your family, school, and community partnership programs is. Examining each Essential Element on its own, however, will provide you a sense of where your strengths and weakness lay. A score in the middle, for example, may be the result of middle range scores across the entire assessment, or it may be the result of high scores on some elements and low scores on others. Each scenario presents a very different picture of family, school, and community partnership program implementation.

To provide an overview of the self-assessment rubric, a four-page version can be found on page 24 of this guide. The following pages present the Essential Elements rubric, one question at time. This format of the self-assessment is expected to be more convenient for evaluation purposes. Individuals can focus on one question at a time and consider the profile that most closely represents their site.

The document "Guided Reflection and Discussion" is designed to walk sites through a step-by-step process for engaging in an improvement-oriented evaluation process with this rubric. Users are encouraged to reference that section for more details on using this rubric to improve their site's family, school, and community partnerships.

## Rubric Organization

<p><b>Essential Element 1: Create an Inclusive Culture</b></p> <p>The school has created an inclusive culture honoring the lived experience of families in early childhood programs and/or school community.</p>	
<b>EE1</b>	How are your practices inclusive of all families?
<b>EE2</b>	How are you learning about families lived experiences?
<b>EE3</b>	Who is leading and supporting the creation of the welcoming culture?
<p><b>Essential Element 2: Building Trusting Relationships</b></p> <p>The site invests in building trusting relationships so that families and programs/schools partner about the education outcomes for children and youth.</p>	
<b>EE1</b>	What do trusting relationships look like in your program, district, or school?
<b>EE2</b>	How are you ensuring effective use of two-way communication with your families to sustain positive relationships?
<b>EE3</b>	How do you leverage relationships with families to achieve your program/district/school goals?
<p><b>Essential Element 3: Design Capacity Building Opportunities</b></p> <p>Capacity building opportunities for staff and families promote shared leadership about educational outcomes for children and youth.</p>	
<b>EE1</b>	How do you use the context expertise of families to better your content expertise?
<b>EE2</b>	How are you utilizing the assets of your families in your programs/schools?
<b>EE3</b>	How are you using FSCP as a school improvement strategy?
<p><b>Essential Element 4: Dedicate Necessary Resources</b></p> <p>The site has and uses the necessary resources to integrate and elevate partnering practices to scale.</p>	
<b>EE1</b>	How do you implement evidence-based practices to cultivate and sustain FSCP?
<b>EE2</b>	Where are you now and where will you go (e.g., Evaluation and goal setting)?
<b>EE3</b>	How will you continually improve your family partnerships through community-based resources?

EE1  
Question 1

**Create an Inclusive Culture**

**The school has created an inclusive culture honoring the lived experience of families in early childhood programs and/or school community.**

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings –

**1. How are your practices inclusive of all families?**

<p>Our staff implements FSCP practices and events in ways that consider only site needs. Flyers, phone calls, and/or social media posts are done only in English and tell families what they need to know about registration, calendar dates for site events and holidays, and/or site policies.</p>	<p><b>Not Working on This</b></p>
<p>Our staff implements FSCP activities in ways that acknowledge diversity of family types and situations in the community but does not attempt to adapt FSCP practices to accommodate this diversity. Communications are often translated into another language or two and food may be served at site events.</p>	<p><b>Early/ Developing Stage</b></p>
<p>Our staff implements FSCP practices that acknowledge the diverse family types and situations that exist in the community by adapting practices to be inclusive of family experiences. FSCP practices at the site typically include translators, in addition to serving food. Events are planned that are intended to celebrate and empower family diversity (i.e., Latinx family night, Muslim family meeting, father involvement, Gay/Straight Alliance).</p>	<p><b>Proficient</b></p>
<p>Our staff implement FSCP practices that celebrate the diversity among families in the school community by designing practices that build on the strengths of this diversity. School events and workshops take place in the community and/or on weekends in consultation with community leaders, so that more families have easier access. Food, translation, childcare, and transportation are provided to enable more families to attend..</p>	<p><b>Excelling</b></p>

EE1  
Question 2

<p><b><u>Create an Inclusive Culture</u></b>  <b>The school has created an inclusive culture honoring the lived experience of families in early childhood programs and/or school community.</b></p>	
<p>Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings –</p> <p><b>2. How are you learning about families lived experiences?</b></p>	
<p>No efforts are made to learn about families in the community. Our focus is on the student and getting them to excel in the classroom environment.</p>	<p><b>Not Working on This</b></p>
<p>Our site tries to learn about families solely through students or by having the school counselor or family liaison work with those who come to them for assistance.</p>	<p><b>Early/ Developing Stage</b></p>
<p>Our site works to learn about families by inviting them to share information about their cultural or ethnic background using a school-wide survey or some other similar method. Teachers invite families to share information about their daily routines and the schedules they maintain with their children.</p>	<p><b>Proficient</b></p>
<p>Our site invites families to share their daily routines, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as the most pressing issues in their community, by engaging in a dialogue with teachers and site staff. Families are included in the planning and design of school events and practices to engage marginalized families. Teachers and site staff actively reach out to families through practices such as home visits early in the school year in order to get to know them better.</p>	<p><b>Excelling</b></p>

EE1  
Question 3

**Create an Inclusive Culture**

**The school has created an inclusive culture honoring the lived experience of families in early childhood programs and/or school community.**

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings –

**3. Who is leading and supporting the creation of the welcoming culture?**

<p>There is no leadership to support the creation, expansion, or persistence of a welcoming site culture. Our principal/site coordinator rarely talks about how welcoming we are or should be to families.</p>	<p><b>Not Working on This</b></p>
<p>The principal/site coordinator delegates all responsibility for expanding or maintaining a welcoming and inclusive culture to someone else and rarely checks in with her/him (e.g., counselors, family liaisons, PTA/PTO).</p>	<p><b>Early/ Developing Stage</b></p>
<p>The principal/site coordinator works closely with others from the site (e.g., counselors, parent liaisons, or PTA/PTO) and supports their efforts to develop a welcoming and inclusive culture throughout the building.</p>	<p><b>Proficient</b></p>
<p>The principal/site coordinator supports a welcoming culture and empowers school staff, teachers, and families to have leadership in the development of FSCP programming. These efforts are visibly supported by the principal/site leader through her/his active participation in FSCP efforts and by sharing a vision for equity through FSCP efforts.</p>	<p><b>Excelling</b></p>

**Building Trusting Relationships**

**The site invests in building trusting relationships so that families and programs/schools partner about the education outcomes for children and youth.**

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings –

**1. What do trusting relationships look like in your program/district/school?**

<p>Our site and teachers do not share with families, the school accountability committee (SAC) or the PTA/PTO information about the organization's improvement goals or whether they are meeting them. There is no person at the site who can help families in need of economic, health, or other kinds of social supports. The teachers and staff at this site are afraid to talk honestly with families if their child is having academic or behavioral problems.</p>	<p><b>Not Working on This</b></p>
<p>At our site, staff and teachers ask the SAC or PTA/PTO to help implement practices the administration and staff feel are needed. There is a staff member (counselor or family liaison) that is responsible for working with students and families who may need economic, health, or other social supports. Several teachers and staff avoid talking honestly with families if their child is having academic or behavioral problems because they are afraid of the families' reaction.</p>	<p><b>Early/ Developing Stage</b></p>
<p>Our site shares data with families about their child's development and/or performance and includes families in generating ways to help their child if he/she is developmentally behind. We include the SAC and PTA/PTO in conversations about performance in relation to our site's goals for instruction and enrollment, and ask the group to contribute ideas to help meet these goals. Most of the teachers and staff at this site talk honestly with families if their child is having academic or behavioral problems.</p>	<p><b>Proficient</b></p>
<p>The site shares data with all families about their child's development and/or performance and invites them to contribute ideas about how to support their child. Also, the site shares data with all families (not just the SAC and PTA/PTO) about overall levels of achievement and discipline and engages them in multiple conversations about setting goals, ways to improve student outcomes, and overall site performance. Student performance and attendance rates are presented to families broken down by race, gender, and other student/family characteristics in order to emphasize the goals of equity and social justice. The teachers and staff at this site try to have early and honest conversations with families about academic or behavioral challenges so that everyone can support the child.</p>	<p><b>Excelling</b></p>

**Building Trusting Relationships**

**The site invests in building trusting relationships so that families and programs/schools partner about the education outcomes for children and youth.**

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings –

**2. How are you ensuring effective use of two-way communication with your families to sustain positive relationships?**

Our site sends out general announcements to families about events, policies, student progress reports, and calendar notifications to families en masse using flyers, robocalls, and posting on our website. We have routine family events like back-to-school nights and parent-teacher conferences where the agenda is set and teachers feel pressure to get through the evening or conference on time and, therefore, cannot leave time for questions.

**Not Working on This**

Our site sends out general announcements to families about site events, policies, student progress reports, and calendar notifications using flyers, robocalls, and our website. Teachers also send home information about site events directly to families using e-mail or text messaging. E-mail addresses of teachers and administrators are easy to find on the site website and/or electronic gradebook (AKA, parent portal). Back-to School night and conferences have time for families to ask teachers questions. All communications with families are translated into the most prevalent languages spoken by families at the school.

**Early/ Developing Stage**

Teachers occasionally send e-mail messages to families about their child's developmental and/or academic progress, as well as the lesson objectives and how classroom instruction will help children attain these. All family events provide families a way to share feedback on the event and time to do so. Families can provide input to the school through traditional parent groups (SAC/PTA/PTO) and via other means such as formal meetings with the principal or through solicitations using e-mail or paper-based strategies. All communications with families are translated into the most prevalent languages spoken by families at the site.

**Proficient**

Teachers at the site send e-mail messages to families at least every other week and encourage families to respond if they have questions or concerns. All family events such as Back-to-School Night, Conferences, and Family Nights have time for families to share their experiences and concerns built into the event. Families are asked what kind of programs they want, and this helps determine the activities that are planned. Family feedback and input is solicited from those who cannot attend site events. Feedback is used to improve site practice and plan for future actions.

**Excelling**

EE2  
Question 3

**Building Trusting Relationships**

The site invests in building trusting relationships so that families and programs/schools partner about the education outcomes for children and youth.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings –

**3. How do you leverage relationships with families to achieve your program/school goals?**

<p>Our site and teachers do not include families in efforts to improve school outcomes or to reach school goals for students. Improvement efforts are focused on classroom instruction or providing additional supports during the school day. Families are asked to help the site primarily by supporting fundraisers, volunteering in classrooms or the office, and attending sporting and performing arts events.</p>	<p><b>Not Working on This</b></p>
<p>The site and teachers ask families to support the site by helping plan and contribute beyond fundraising, volunteering on-site, or attending sporting and performing arts events, and includes activities like multicultural nights or other at-school events. Improvement efforts include a focus on developing a welcoming climate for families.</p>	<p><b>Early/ Developing Stage</b></p>
<p>We survey families and ask about their own lives, cultures, and ways (funds of knowledge) they would feel comfortable helping or contributing to the site and/or their child's education. Families are asked to sit on site committees and advocate on behalf of families.</p>	<p><b>Proficient</b></p>
<p>Educators get to know their students' families and make sure they know how to contact the teacher. Families are encouraged to ask teachers about their child's development or learning. Sites train families in effective leadership and ask them to discuss site goals, plan family engagement practices, and serve as ambassadors to the community. Families are given leadership roles in the partnership work and may help teachers with instruction in the classroom.</p>	<p><b>Excelling</b></p>

EE3  
Question 1

**Design Capacity Building Opportunities**

**Capacity building opportunities for staff and families promote shared leadership about educational outcomes for children and youth.**

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings –

**1. How do you use the context expertise of families to better your content expertise?**

<p>Site decisions are driven almost entirely by district or state accountability or early childhood licensure guidelines for instruction and student achievement. Our site implements only the district-driven curriculum to organize lesson plans and deliver instruction and/or does not use a curriculum.</p>	<p><b>Not Working on This</b></p>
<p>Site decisions are driven mostly by district or state accountability or early childhood licensure guidelines for instruction and student achievement, but we consider how to communicate with families and how different families might respond before we implement anything. Our site implements curriculum and teachers create lesson plans with families in mind. Materials that match families' cultural and ethnic background are considered in teachers' lesson plans.</p>	<p><b>Early/ Developing Stage</b></p>
<p>Site decisions and leadership consider the family and community needs when establishing policy. Our site engages with families and community partners to review the extent cultural, ethnic, and community assets are included in lesson plans and curricula.</p>	<p><b>Proficient</b></p>
<p>Site decisions and leadership invite family and community members into the process of making policy decisions. Our site infuses family and community expertise and "funds of knowledge" into lesson plans and the overall curricular approach</p>	<p><b>Excelling</b></p>

EE3  
Question 2

**Design Capacity Building Opportunities**

**Capacity building opportunities for staff and families promote shared leadership about educational outcomes for children and youth.**

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings –

**2. How are you utilizing the assets of your families in your programs/schools?**

<p>FSCP practices are decided, planned, and implemented by site staff or teachers without family input. Events are typically presentations intended to inform families about site procedures or system policies.</p>	<p><b>Not Working on This</b></p>
<p>FSCP practices are used to support student learning and development by encouraging families to raise funds and volunteer in the classroom or office. Families are encouraged to monitor homework and interventions and support their children's learning from home. Community business partners typically provide meals at partnership events.</p>	<p><b>Early/ Developing Stage</b></p>
<p>FSCP practices are used to support student learning and safety outcomes. The site provides opportunities for families to provide input into the FSCP programming and learn effective ways to support their children at home and outside of the building.</p>	<p><b>Proficient</b></p>
<p>Family and community partners serve as co-leaders with site staff in the site's implementation of FSCP program practices. Local family and community businesses are used to help provide food and instructional resources to support instructional practices with children. Families are asked to educate teachers about their own family traditions, routines, and community strengths.</p>	<p><b>Excelling</b></p>

EE3  
Question 2

**Design Capacity Building Opportunities**

**Capacity building opportunities for staff and families promote shared leadership about educational outcomes for children and youth.**

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings –

**3. How are you using FSCP as a school improvement strategy?**

<p>FSCP is not a part of our site improvement strategy and is not mentioned in our Unified Improvement Plan (UIP)/annual reports. Professional development is focused on instructional delivery to students and/or classroom management strategies.</p>	<p><b>Not Working on This</b></p>
<p>Our site leaders include FSCP practices as required parts of the site's UIP. We provide professional development about how to implement FSCP practices and/or programs. Data are collected from 25-50% of families about their satisfaction with the site.</p>	<p><b>Early/ Developing Stage</b></p>
<p>In addition to including FSCP in our site's UIP, we have professional development training about FSCP practices and programs that promote equity and improve student outcomes. Data are collected from more than 50% of families about community needs and their satisfaction with the site.</p>	<p><b>Proficient</b></p>
<p>In addition to including FSCP in the site's UIP, professional development training is conducted about using FSCP to promote equity and improve children's outcomes. The training is utilized to help develop our improvement plans. Also, data are collected from more than 70% of families about community needs and satisfaction with the site.</p>	<p><b>Excelling</b></p>

**Dedicate Necessary Resources**

**The site has and uses the necessary resources to integrate and elevate partnering practices to scale.**

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings –

**1. How do you implement evidence-based practices to cultivate and sustain FSCP?**

<p>We do not implement evidence-based practices designed to strengthen or sustain FSCP. Activities that are implemented are those that are traditionally implemented (e.g., Back-to-School night and Parent-Teacher conferences), and in ways that have always been organized. There is no funding allocated for new FSCP activities or programming. There is not an individual or group coordinating FSCP practices throughout the site.</p>	<p><b>Not Working on This</b></p>
<p>Our FSCP practices are coordinated by a site/teacher leader, the school counselor, or a family liaison. Activities that are implemented are those that are traditionally implemented (e.g., Back-to-School night and Parent-Teacher conferences), but teachers are encouraged to think about and implement improvements. Most of the funding for FSCP activities comes from the PTA/PTO budget, not the school budget. FSCP activities may or may not be formally evaluated.</p>	<p><b>Early/ Developing Stage</b></p>
<p>There is a team at our site that coordinates all FSCP programming and evaluation, and it has funding for their work. Members of the FSCP team are comprised of administrators, teachers, a diverse range of families, and community representatives. The team keeps a file or notebook of materials that describe how events or activities were organized and implemented. Activities that are implemented are those that are traditionally implemented (e.g., Back-to-School night and Parent-Teacher conferences), but teachers are encouraged to think about how they can support family engagement at home or outside of the site. Also, the team always conducts an evaluation of FSCP practices that it implemented.</p>	<p><b>Proficient</b></p>
<p>There is a team at our site that coordinates all FSCP programming and evaluation, and that has funding for their work. Members of the FSCP team are rotated every couple of years and are comprised of administrators, teachers, a diverse range of families, and community representatives. The team keeps a file or notebook of materials that describe how events or activities were organized and implemented. Also, the team always conducts an evaluation of each FSCP practice that is implemented and discusses how improvements can be made.</p>	<p><b>Excelling</b></p>

EE4  
Question 2

**Dedicate Necessary Resources**

**The site has and uses the necessary resources to integrate and elevate partnering practices to scale.**

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings –

**2. Where are you now and where will you go (e.g., evaluation and goal setting)?**

We do not evaluate our FSCP events or program implementation nor do we set goals or establish an idea for what FSCP relationships will look like in the following site year. Time is not devoted to FSCP in our site staff or site improvement meetings.

**Not Working on This**

We evaluate our FSCP events, but not our program implementation or the extent to which we have a sitewide program. On occasion, time is provided during our staff or site improvement meetings to discuss FSCP. FSCP activities are the responsibility of the PTA/PTO. Progress on FSCP practices is measured in terms of family attendance.

**Early/ Developing Stage**

We evaluate our FSCP events and the extent to which we have a sitewide program. Time is sometimes provided to discuss FSCP during our staff or site improvement meetings. FSCP activities are the shared responsibility of the PTA/PTO, SAC, and other site committees. Progress on FSCP is measured in terms of whether all groups of families are being reached. The site leader emphasizes to teachers and staff the importance of FSCP.

**Proficient**

The site FSCP team evaluates what the site and teachers are doing to implement FSCP practices aimed at improving student outcomes, as well as those designed to improve relationships among the site, families, and the community. Time is often provided at staff or site improvement meetings to discuss how our FSCP programming is contributing to site and student improvement. Each year, the FSCP team sets goals for the FSCP practices beyond those about attendance at events or activities. The site leader emphasizes to teachers the importance of FSCP and works to remove individuals who do not share this vision.

**Excelling**

EE4  
Question 3

**Dedicate Necessary Resources**

**The site has and uses the necessary resources to integrate and elevate partnering practices to scale.**

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings –

**3. How will you continually improve your family partnerships through community-based resources?**

<p>There is no team or person to establish or coordinate community partnerships. Data about the participation and impact of our community partnerships are not collected or examined.</p>	<p><b>Not Working on This</b></p>
<p>There is a person to establish and coordinate community partnerships, and the site collects data about the number of partnerships, as well as family/student participation.</p>	<p><b>Early/ Developing Stage</b></p>
<p>There is a person or team to establish and coordinate community partnership programming. The site collects data about the number of partnerships, family/student participation, and the impact of these partnerships on academic, social-emotional, health, and financial needs of students and families.</p>	<p><b>Proficient</b></p>
<p>There is a team at our site that coordinates all community partnership programming and evaluation. The team collects data from families and community partners about the assets that exist in the community and discusses with them how community resources can help meet the academic, social-emotional, health, and financial needs of students and families. This process takes place annually.</p>	<p><b>Excelling</b></p>

## FSCP Rubric Summary Worksheet

Please write or indicate in the table below the ratings you feel describe your site. If you would like to convert your ratings to a numeric score to help calculate an overall average score, we recommend the following scale:

Not Working on This = 0    Early or Developing Stage = 1    Proficient = 2    Excelling = 3

Essential Element	My Ratings
<b>Element 1: Create an Inclusive Culture</b>	
a) How are your practices inclusive of all families?	
b) How are you learning about families lived experiences?	
c) Who is leading and supporting the creation of the welcoming culture?	
<b>Element 2: Building Trusting Relationships</b>	
a) What do trusting relationships look like in your program, district, or school?	
b) How are you ensuring effective use of two-way communication with your families to sustain positive relationships?	
c) How do you leverage relationships with families to achieve your program/district/school goals?	
<b>Element 3: Design Capacity Building Opportunities</b>	
a) How do you use the context expertise of families to better your content expertise?	
b) How are you utilizing the assets of your families in your programs/schools?	
c) How are you using FSCP as a school improvement strategy?	
<b>Element 4: Dedicate Necessary Resources</b>	
a) How do you implement evidence-based practices to cultivate and sustain FSCP?	
b) Where are you now and where will you go (e.g., Evaluation and goal setting)?	
c) How will you continually improve your family partnerships through community-based resources?	
Average Rating/Score	

To calculate your average rating, add the scores together and then divide that number by 12\*.

\*note: 3 questions for each element (3x4=12)

## Engaging in Guided Discussion and Reflection

The following section provides users with a 4-page tool to help each person think and reflect more deeply about their ratings. At the bottom of each table are the ingredients of a strong program of family, school, and community partnerships. We recommend using these pages to help you rate your site for each individual element. This rubric and the accompanying tools (reflection prompts and Summary Worksheet) will be most useful in helping sites set a path for improving family, school, and community partnership if they are part of an evaluation process.

### **Step 1: Individuals establish their own rating of the site's partnership efforts.**

Use these prompts to provide details and descriptions of your site.

Compare your responses to the rubric and identify which rating most closely matches your description.

Record the rating in the Summary Worksheet provided in this this user's guide.

### **Step 2: Bring together a group of stakeholders to participate in a discussion about their ratings.**

This process should include a range of stakeholders including administrators, teachers, family members, community partners, and students at the secondary level.

**As a group**, members of the evaluation and accountability committee should share their ratings with one another, as well as the reasons why they felt that rating was most appropriate.

**We encourage this group to come to a consensus** about how the site is performing across each of the four Essential Elements. If one or two individuals have a rating that is very different from others, it is important to let those people speak openly and honestly about why they rated the site that way. Listen to their reasoning with empathy and avoid limiting the conversation. **This conversation is not meant to change people's minds, it is about hearing a diverse range of perspectives.**

### **Step 3: The evaluation group should agree to partnership improvement goals and a set of next steps to help the site meet those goals.**

EE1

Create an Inclusive Culture

The school has created an inclusive culture honoring the lived experience of families in early childhood programs and/or school community.

Reflection Questions:

1. How are your practices inclusive of all families?
2. How are you learning about families lived experiences?
3. Who is leading and supporting the creation of the welcoming culture?

Your Ratings:  
(NW, ED, P or E)

Describe the extent to which you feel your site is welcoming to families and why.

Describe two practices implemented in the past 4 months that exemplify how your site takes into consideration the lived experiences of families.

Describe at least two ways the educators or administration at your site try to learn about families.

Describe the way(s) your site leadership is supporting a welcoming culture.

Ingredients of a Partnership Approach: School leadership, Attention to inequities, Giving voice & sharing power, Programmatic approach, Teamwork & shared leadership, and Evaluation

## Building Trusting Relationships

The site invests in building trusting relationships so that families and programs/schools partner about the education outcomes for children and youth.

Reflection Questions:

1. What do trusting relationships look like in your program, district, or school?
2. How are you ensuring effective use of two-way communication with your families to sustain positive relationships?
3. How do you leverage relationships with families to achieve your program/district/school goals?

Your Ratings:  
(NW, ED, P or E)

Describe the extent to which you feel your site prioritizes developing trusting relationships with families.

Describe two instances in the past 4 months that exemplify how your site has invested in building trust with families.

Describe at least two ways the educators or administration at your site listen to families about their needs or hopes for the site or their child.

Describe how your site includes family engagement as a key lever in achieving goals for the site or children/students.

Ingredients of a Partnership Approach: School leadership, Attention to inequities, Giving voice & sharing power, Programmatic approach, Teamwork & shared leadership, and Evaluation

Design Capacity Building Opportunities

Capacity building opportunities for staff and families promote shared leadership about educational outcomes for children and youth.

Reflection Questions:

1. How do you use the context expertise of families to better your content expertise?
2. How are you utilizing the assets of your families in your programs/schools?
3. How are you using FSCP as a school improvement strategy?

Your Ratings:  
(NW, ED, P or E)

Describe the extent to which your site is providing opportunities for educators and families to improve how they work together to support student learning and development.

Describe two practices implemented in the past year that were intended to improve the skills of teachers and/or families.

Describe the ways family strengths are brought into the site to support family engagement or instructional programming.

Describe the way(s) family engagement is included in your site accountability framework or documents.

Ingredients of a Partnership Approach: School leadership, Attention to inequities, Giving voice & sharing power, Programmatic approach, Teamwork & shared leadership, and Evaluation

Dedicate Necessary Resources

The site has and uses the necessary resources to integrate and elevate partnering practices to scale.

Reflection Questions:

1. How do you implement evidence-based practices to cultivate and sustain FSCP?
2. Where are you now and where will you go (e.g., evaluation and goal setting)?
3. How will you continually improve your family partnerships through community-based resources?

Your Ratings:  
(NW, ED, P or E)

To what extent does your site adequately invest and direct resources (financial, people, time) into the family, school, and community partnership efforts, and why?

Describe up to two partnership practices your site implemented this past year that were evidence-based.

To what extent are the partnership practices your site implements aligned to the goals in your accountability and improvement plan, and how well are you assessing whether these practices are effective?

What processes are in place to help you improve the partnership practices your site uses with families or community partners?

Ingredients of a Partnership Approach: School leadership, Attention to inequities, Giving voice & sharing power, Programmatic approach, Teamwork & shared leadership, and Evaluation

# The FSCP Collaborative

## Case Stories



During the 2021-22 school year, six districts in Colorado joined the Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP) Collaborative.

Districts in the Collaborative received regular coaching from Colorado Department of Education (CDE) staff members and participated in quarterly “cluster meetings” with their peers. The following case stories highlight each team’s journey through completing the rubrics and weaving FSCP throughout their district’s operations and strategic plans.

A few themes emerged from the interviews with Collaborative team leads. First, FSCP does not live solely within Title I schools. While family engagement has requirements and funding mandates throughout the Every Student Succeeds Act, every student, every family, in every school benefits when a strong partnership exists between home and school. Through Collaborative participation, many districts were able to, at least, begin to strengthen FSCP beyond a Title I requirement.

Second, many of the case stories indicate that team members were “humbled” or “demoralized” after completing the rubrics. The intent of the rubrics is not to be discouraging. Every one of these districts had robust FSCP activities in place prior to joining the Collaborative. However, the rubrics highlighted that these activities existed in isolation and were not part of an intentional partnership structure. Completing the rubrics with a leadership team helped the district elevate FSCP as a foundational school improvement strategy.

Finally, each of the case stories demonstrate the thoughtful approach that Collaborative teams took when determining their FSCP priority. While each district went through the same process, the case stories also highlight that participating in the Collaborative and completing the rubrics is individual for each district. Regardless of the districts’ size, population, or capacity to support FSCP, the rubrics served as a guide to help Collaborative teams identify starting points, set priorities, and cultivate family engagement through research-based high-impact strategies.



### Colorado Springs District 11

### CASE 1

Colorado Springs District 11 (D11) is a large and diverse district with approximately 22,000 enrolled students.

LouAnn Dekleva, D11’s Community Engagement Volunteer Administrator, was an active member of the CDE’s monthly Family, School, and Community Partnering Coffee Chats and began hearing about the P-12 FSCP Framework and District Collaborative through these events. Recognizing that family engagement in D11 simply wasn’t working, but not clear as to why, LouAnn and D11’s District Accountability Committee (DAC) chairperson brought the idea of the collaborative to the superintendent.

With family engagement included as one option for schools to choose for their Unified Improvement Plan, the superintendent saw the value in this opportunity and gave the green light. Before putting a team together, LouAnn reviewed the Framework's rubrics and realized that, despite over three decades in D11, she was not able to answer the questions.

She shared the rubrics with colleagues and discovered that she was not alone - no one, including community liaisons and FIT (Family Involvement Toolkit) coaches, was able to answer if and how D11 was implementing effective and high impact family, school, and community partnering (FSCP) practices. LouAnn and the DAC chair identified pockets of partnering throughout the district, but realized that a systemic viewpoint of family engagement was missing. Even more concerning, family engagement was not a priority in any discussion district leaders were having around students' academics, test scores, and growth plans.

LouAnn sat down with the DAC chair and the district's MTSS Facilitator for the elementary schools to decide if they joined the collaborative, who they would invite to their team. Out of this meeting came a long list of departments and programs across the district that touched families in some way. This list showed that there were redundant and overlapping efforts in some areas with some programs and departments working in silos.

They also realized that there were staff in the district they didn't even know who were engaging with families in one way or another. They decided that in order to have the greatest impact, they would join the Collaborative and would invite a representative from each program and department on their list.

The D11 Collaborative Team is made up of LouAnn, the DAC chairperson, the MTSS Facilitator as well as other MTSS staff, representatives from Special Education, community liaisons, FIT coaches, representatives from Adult Education, two individuals from the City of Colorado Springs, two from the public health department, and two from the community center. In total, there are 25 members on the team and it continues to grow. While that number may seem overwhelming, it opened up opportunities for collaboration and to address the overlapping work that was being done. It opened up communication around family, school, and community partnering across the district and city.

## An Eye-Opening Practice

Despite changes in the district, such as the superintendent leaving and an interim coming in, the work went on. LouAnn introduced the rubric to the team members and gave everyone time to sit with it and conduct their own assessment. Some members approached it with a district perspective, others with a building perspective, and still others with a broader community perspective. The team was shocked as their scores were averaged and they found that across the board, in each element of the Framework, they scored ones and twos.

"It became daunting," LouAnn stated. With every element rating as a priority, it took time to determine what the most pressing concern was. The element that emerged was **Element One, Create an Inclusive Culture**, with a focus on the specific question, **How are you learning about families' lived experiences?**



## Create an Inclusive Culture

The district hadn't done any work connected to learning about families in a long time and it seemed to the team that in order to move forward with the other elements, understanding their families' lived experiences was the necessary first step. They recognized that without understanding what families experience and need, it would be impossible to build trust and capacity. They considered how to go about learning about families' lived experiences and how to make families comfortable sharing this information. One team member from the restorative justice program proposed the idea of listening circles.

The International Institute for Restorative Practices describes listening circles as “an opportunity to speak and listen to each other in an atmosphere of safety, decorum, and equality...to help people gain a shared sense of understanding and emotional connection” (2022). After some hesitation, the team participated in their own listening circle to better understand the practice.

It was an eye-opening experience; colleagues who had known each other for over a decade learned new things about one another. From there, it was an easy decision. Learning circles were a safe and effective way for families to express themselves.

The team scheduled a listening tour across the district, with five listening circles, each held in a different geographic location and outside of school buildings. This allowed families who were uncomfortable being in school buildings to attend at either a library or a community center. The Educator Insights Department, which oversees enrollment, assessment, and system improvement for the district, shared with the Collaborative team which schools had selected family engagement as one of their UIP goals. The team then contacted these schools, introduced CDE's P-12 FSCP Framework and explained the purpose of the rubrics, and then asked the school leaders if they would like to hold a listening circle for their community as part of their family engagement goal. Five schools agreed to participate.

The Collaborative Team provided translators, food, and childcare. Families registered via a QR code to provide basic information so that the team could plan for the appropriate amount of food and number of restorative justice facilitators to lead the circles. The team found that more people signed up than who actually attended. Actual attendance varied, the highest being 30 attendees at one listening circle and the lowest being five at another.

But no matter the attendance number, families opened up. At one listening circle with Spanish speaking families, they shared that this was their only opportunity to come and talk about what was happening at their children's middle school, because there weren't any interpreters available at the school. Other parents shared concerns about their LGBTQIA students, how they

were being treated in schools and how they as parents were being perceived by other parents. The listening circles truly did create a safe space for families to share their lived experiences.

The Collaborative Team plans to stay together next year and to continue to meet monthly, while also creating a smaller core group to better guide the work. Recognizing that there are very important voices missing from the already large team, they plan to invite parents of special education students and parents of English Language Learners. They also hope to bring in the student voice more.

“If we’re planting seeds that listening circles are a way to get parents to engage and tell [us] what’s happening at their school and what they need...if that’s all we get out of this, then I’ve decided that’s good enough for me.” -

LouAnn Dekleva, 2022

While it is too early to note any major changes, D11’s Collaborative Team has the ear of the school board now, and is helping the board members make the connection between family engagement and student success. At DAC meetings, parents are requesting listening circles at their schools next year because they see them having an impact on how the district approaches family, school, and community partnering.

## CASE 2

### Weld County School District RE-5J

For a small rural district with just five schools, trust between families and schools is crucial. But over the past three years, multiple changes in leadership has led to a lack of trust in Weld RE-5J (Weld). In an effort to rebuild relationships and with a new superintendent in place, this year the district created a new position, Director of Family, School, and Community Partnerships (FSCP).

As the new Director of FSCP, Kasey Ross joined the FSCP Collaborative to learn how other districts were approaching the work, to connect with the folks in those districts, and to have the support of state experts. Kasey’s



previous two decades as both an educator and administrator had given him a glance into the world of FSCP, and he now had the opportunity to dig in deeper. “Sitting

down with this work, going through a rubric and seeing exactly where we are, I’ve never done that before joining this Collaborative,” Kasey shared. His hope was that as a member

of the Collaborative, he and his team would find the right direction and place to start the work that was so needed in Weld.

The year prior, the district had created an FSCP team as part of an MTSS grant, in addition to an RtI team and PBIS team. Kasey inherited the FSCP team, made up of one chairperson from each school. This meant that while the conversation around family engagement could happen at the district level, each school then had their own smaller team to do the work on the ground.

Before Weld’s FSCP team completed the P-12 FSCP Framework rubrics, the members of the team suspected that the priority was

going to be **Element Two, Building Trusting Relationships**. The changes in the district over the past three years had created a gap between what was really going on in schools and what families thought was going on, and what schools were doing and what families thought schools were doing. The rubrics, once completed, only supported this suspicion.



The team decided that the necessary starting point was communication, and more specifically, communicating what strong family, school, and community partnerships look like in action.

## Launching FSCP

Prior to the pandemic, the FSCP team had attended the state's FSCP Annual Retreat and learned about the National Association of Family, School, and Community Partnerships' (NAFSCE) space launch metaphor. The space launch metaphor is a simple way to explain what FSCP is to any person, whether in the education field or not. It describes FSCP as "effective family, school, and community engagement that works like mission control, launching children's learning" (NAFSCE & Frameworks Institute, 2022).

This metaphor was an "ah ha" moment for Kasey, and he knew that it was exactly what Weld needed to reframe engagement and begin communicating with their families and community in a new way. With Element Two

as their priority, and communication their focus, the team set a goal to host two family events in each school, one in Fall and one in Spring, as a way to bring families into the schools and begin building back those connections.

The first step was getting buy-in for the metaphor from the FSCP team. Together they watched short videos provided by NAFSCE that showed how to use the space launch metaphor to frame family engagement and the roles that everyone involved in a child's life has to play to launch that child's education. They revisited the videos as needed, until the whole team recognized the power of the metaphor and how to communicate it to families and members of the community.

While Kasey acknowledged that they could have used the metaphor more in their messaging, they did post it to social media monthly. They organized a "rocket launch" at the start of the 2021-2022 school year and highlighted the metaphor at their events.

The family events were a big success, with over 300 attendees at a few of them. The district provided dinner and activities for the students, and a few schools included capacity-building opportunities where parents could attend sessions and, for example, learn how to play a game with their child using sight words. The team also started attending larger community events and hosting a booth. With the support of their superintendent, they purchased an awning with their logo for the booth. Members of the community took notice, commenting on the FSCP team's presence. The community began to recognize the effort and the team was able to show that they were there to have fun and to support students and families.

The team also distributed a survey. At the start of the year, they had concerns regarding two-way communication and expected results of the survey to show that families echoed those concerns. And yet, of the 180 respondents, almost all agreed that the Weld RE-5J schools used multi-directional communication strategies; schools communicated well with families and families felt they could communicate with the schools. These results indicated that while communicating with families is always deserving of attention, families may have a different perception of it than district leaders. It also highlights how step-by-step, the space launch metaphor and showing up to community events can have a big impact.

### Next Steps

Like many districts, the biggest challenge for Weld was at the secondary level. While the family events at elementary schools were all considered successes, the team was unable to make an event happen at the middle and high schools. For the 2022-2023 school year, the FSCP Team has a goal of having at least one event at each secondary school.

The FSCP Team also realized that an important piece of communication that was missing was authentic conversations with stakeholders that go beyond what a survey can reveal. Using the World Cafe method, the

Team plans to invite as many different stakeholders from the community - the DAC and SAC teams, representatives of special education and gifted and talented education, and members of the different ethnicities in the community - and encourage authentic dialogue around family, school, and community partnering and the space launch metaphor.

Finally, the team identified community experts who could come into schools more often. One question on the last survey they distributed asked those who were interested to list their areas of expertise and how they could contribute to schools. With this information, the team now has a database of community experts that schools can invite in.

"One by one, we're slowly building those connections and trust," Kasey stated.

As Kasey reflected on his first year in the FSCP collaborative, he noted that early on, it is easy to feel as though your district is doing poorly in all areas of the Framework. But by completing the rubrics, Weld's FSCP team was able to gain clarity around what areas they really needed to focus on first and how to align the supports provided by the state with the specific growth needs of the district.

## Greeley-Evans School District 6

CASE 3

In Northern Colorado, 22,000 students attend Greeley-Evans School District 6 (Greeley). With an 85% free and reduced lunch rate and a high rate of



culturally and linguistically diverse students, family, school, and community partnerships (FSCP) are a key feature of their Innovation 2030 strategic plan. Within that strategic plan, the district highlights family engagement and the steps the district is going to take in order to increase those efforts. Innovation 2030 states that by 2025, at least 90% of

Greeley schools will have a goal or strategy related to FSCP embedded in their Unified Improvement Plan.

In addition to family engagement being included in their strategic plan, the district recently completed Title I monitoring, and evidence of parent and family engagement was one area that was identified as needing to be addressed. And so, Greeley decided to join CDE's FSCP Collaborative.

As members of the Collaborative, Greeley hoped to gain a network of other districts to connect and brainstorm with. Having already worked closely with a neighboring district, Greeley's team knew how such collaboration could build the capacity of their own district. With the recent Title I monitoring in mind, the team also hoped to better understand how they were including their stakeholders in informing decisions around what family engagement activities were being offered. And of course, the main driver was alignment with the Innovative 2030 strategic plan and being able to implement those strategies included in the Unified Improvement Plan. Greeley's Collaborative team included a wide array of district staff. It included the Director of Cultural Excellence and Family Engagement, the Family Center Coordinator, the Title I Parent Liaison, the McKinney-Vento Liaison, principals, assistant principals, counselors, and teachers.

After the team completed the P-12 FSCP Framework rubrics, multiple priorities emerged. Across the board, it was clear that Greeley needed to focus on **Element One, Create an Inclusive Culture**, and **Element Two, Building Trusting Relationships**. The team felt that without those two elements in place, they wouldn't be ready for Elements Three and Four, Design Capacity Building Opportunities and Dedicate Necessary Resources.



**Create an  
Inclusive  
Culture**



**Build  
Trusting  
Relationships**

Within Element One, the team dedicated their focus on two questions: How are your practices inclusive of all families? and How are you learning about families' lived experiences? The team appreciated that these questions did not pertain to one particular group of families, but encompassed all families. Within Element Two, all three questions guided their work: What do trusting relationships look like? How are you ensuring effective use of two-way communication? and How do you leverage relationships with families to achieve the program or school goals?

While the team was considering systems-wide needs for the district based on the Title I monitoring and Innovation 2030, they also focused on digging into the FSCP work with one specific school, Franklin Middle School. They called Franklin their "exemplar school" that took the rubric, went through the self-evaluation process, and took the necessary steps to produce specific outcomes by the end of the year.

It wasn't a perfect process for the Greeley team. As they worked their way through the rubrics, the teachers on the team became concerned that the rubrics were a list of "gotcha" questions about what they were

and were not doing regarding family engagement. It took a lot of conversation and reflection for the whole team to understand the purpose of the rubrics and the root causes of their final proficiency ratings. The work also revealed that some staff were working in silos even within the school building, a revelation that counteracted the team's initial belief that everybody is working together to create a cohesive culture within the school buildings.

### From Silos to Cohesion

Ultimately, the team developed a shared understanding that the rubrics weren't intended to evaluate individual staff members; rather, they were a way to establish a baseline for the school and start planning family engagement goals. One outcome they saw was increased buy-in from Franklin Middle School staff. For example, one of the teachers, who was also a member of the Collaborative Team, was trying to capture what families are doing for work and careers, and what home life looked like. She was using her weekends to do individual interviews to get to know her families.

When she shared that with the team, it shined a light on the work that she was doing. Other people in the group wanted to support her efforts, and the team was able to get more teachers to help with either setting up an interview with particular families or doing the interviews themselves. It became a team effort, and brought unity to the work that was being done to learn about families' lived experiences.

Franklin also added increasing family engagement into their improvement plan. Members of the Collaborative team who were also Franklin staff used the rubrics to set goals on attendance at parent-teacher

conferences and number of positive phone calls home. They reflected on their progress on these goals throughout the school year, and will continue to develop specific action steps that further these efforts.

The Greeley Collaborative Team considers Franklin Middle School a success regarding the way staff used the rubrics to reflect, set goals, and put plans into action. The team will continue to check in with Franklin and provide support and feedback as needed and plans to bring the rubrics to six more schools in the 2022-2023 school year. They will keep adding schools each year until the work has gone district-wide.

Greeley understands that while family engagement has traditionally been tied to Title I because of the funds that are set aside, there needs to be capacity building and additional resources provided across the district to support those schools that do not have Title I funds. Having a framework for family, school, and community partnering that provides clarity around how family engagement is not an additional task only helps to build it out across the system. Next year, with Innovation 2030 in mind, Greeley will be putting in place specific FSCP practices, such as home visits and empathy interviews, that will help the team continue to create an inclusive culture and build trusting relationships.

"I think that historically folks have looked at family engagement as an additional task and it may feel like that in the beginning, but having a framework with it and having support, resources, and materials from CDE is evidence that it's not," stated Jesse Tijerina, Greeley's Director of Cultural Excellence and Family Engagement.

## CASE 4

# Morgan County School District RE-3

For a small town of 13,000 residents, Fort Morgan is one of the most diverse regions of Colorado. Predominantly made up of Hispanic and Latinx families, Fort Morgan has seen a rise in refugee families from eastern Africa and Central America with approximately 23 different languages spoken. A significant number of high school students have interrupted education and are over the age of 18 years old. Most of these students work nights to help support their families, and many families live in poverty. Such diversity underlines the necessity of equitable family, school, and community partnerships (FSCP) to ensure that all students are receiving the support they need to be successful.



As Morgan County School District RE-3 was moving out of the pandemic, Assistant Superintendent Rena Frasco thought the time was right for the district to focus on one of her passions, family school and community partnering. A change in leadership was coming, and Rena knew that her new superintendent would be open to conversations with principals regarding FSCP efforts. Rena joined the FSCP Collaborative in order to understand how other districts were implementing FSCP and to push Fort Morgan forward with its own FSCP initiative.

While Rena focused on the entire district, with only eight schools in the district it was easy to work directly with principals and their specific schools. Rena's hope was to take the Framework's rubrics to her principal group and to dig into what they were doing well in their buildings and what areas of FSCP they needed to strengthen. The group recognized, like many districts, that elementary schools built solid relationships with families, but those relationships dropped off as students transitioned into middle and high school. As they worked through the rubrics, they found there were pockets of promising practices that they did

really well, but there was work that needed to be done at a higher level, such as communicating with families.

While her Collaborative team was not as big as she had initially hoped, Rena's team was made up of her English Language Development Director, the district administrative team, and the district accountability committee. The main role of the team was completing the rubrics. This work provided an in-depth perspective of where various stakeholders thought they were at with FSCP, and revealed the gaps between where principals believed they were compared to parents' perspectives.

"We've had a lot of changes in the district," Rena stated, "and I think we should always be striving to do better about how we are partnering."

As the team completed the rubrics, it became clear that while all four of the Essential Elements needed to be a priority, the place to start was **Element One, Create an Inclusive Culture**. Specifically, within that element, the team identified the

question, **How are your practices inclusive of all families?** as vital to their work. Two-way communication and language accessibility for families who did not speak English was severely lacking. Many of the family liaisons throughout the district were bilingual, speaking both English and Spanish, but there was an obvious need for translations and interpreters in languages other than Spanish. Interpreters were especially important as many of the refugee families were illiterate.

In addition to Element One, one question from **Element Three, Design Capacity Building Opportunities**, stood out to the team: **How are you using FSCP as a school improvement strategy?** The answer was simple - the district wasn't. From this realization, Rena tasked her principals to include FSCP as one of their goals in their unified improvement plan.



### Appreciating the Small Wins

It was a tough year in Fort Morgan. The team was not able to get as much accomplished as they had hoped. At the beginning of the school year, the school board charged the DAC to focus their attention on the four-day

week, and FSCP was rarely mentioned again. Support was missing from leadership above Rena. Admin meetings did not focus on instruction and UIP goals. Because of this, Rena utilized the quarterly check-in meetings with CDE staff to adjust her goals and narrow her focus to appreciating the small wins.

One example of that is Rena asking the DAC group, "How do you think we are currently building an inclusive culture?" She had them write their thoughts down on post-it notes, sticking these to the walls of the room, and followed this with a gallery walk. Rena also considers having principals include FSCP as a UIP goal a small win - small only because the team did not continuously monitor progress on these goals throughout the year.

The outcomes for Fort Morgan are more about hopes for the future. Rena will check in with her principals on their UIP goals and have them reflect on whether they saw any changes in FSCP in their schools or if, instead, they continued to operate as usual. She envisions establishing a parent as DAC chair and a true FSCP team that can set specific goals for the district.

Another hope of Rena's is to focus more on equitable partnerships. While Rena is hard pressed to identify any significant changes throughout the district, there was one seemingly small change that will have a wide-reaching impact on Fort Morgan's many diverse families. The district purchased Language Line, an on-demand interpretation and translation service. This speaks directly to creating an inclusive culture for all families and improving language accessibility. Language Line provides families and educators with the opportunity to translate and interpret in over 240 languages, and so is a major step forward for such a diverse community.

As she looks to next year, Rena plans to dig back into the rubrics and the proficiency ratings with every principal to take an honest look at where each school is at on the P-12 FSCP Framework. She wants to continue to talk about their successes and reflect on

their challenges in order to be strategic with their planning. And with supportive leadership coming in, it looks rather likely that Rena will be accomplishing all of these things.

## Jefferson County Public Schools

### CASE 5

In Jefferson County Public Schools (JeffCo), family, school, and community partnering (FSCP), like many other districts, has been under the purview of Title I. But with only 19% of their 155 schools falling under the jurisdiction of Title I,



that meant there was no cohesive approach to family engagement across the district. Prior to the 2021-2022 school year, the previous superintendent had tried to put supports in place for the district by creating a district point of contact for FSCP. However, the position was housed in the Communications division and lacked the

necessary resources. When both that superintendent and staff member left the district, FSCP efforts outside of Title I schools stalled.

Things changed with the new school year and a new superintendent. The district seemed to be on the brink of a more district-wide approach to family engagement. The Title I & Community Family Connections program learned about the Colorado Department of Education's FSCP Collaborative. This office already had a strong FSCP foundation. With a comprehensive FSCP vision, the Title I & Community Family Connections department exemplifies how to do family engagement well. The program was also continuing to grow with the addition of an Assistant Director.

At the same time, the Covid-19 pandemic encouraged more parents to speak up as they became more deeply involved in their children's day-to-day learning. Regardless of backgrounds and demographics, parents throughout the district were voicing that they wanted to be more involved and informed.

District leaders turned to the Title I & Community Family Connections program for support and guidance on cultivating that comprehensive FSCP vision district-wide. Joining the state's FSCP Collaborative allowed the department to reflect on the work that had already been done, to gain clarity on where the district needed to grow, and to network with other districts in order to learn about their FSCP practices and challenges.

"I appreciate that we've been aligned in our family engagement program with the state and the national standards," stated Susan Kimes-Demboski, the Title I Family Engagement Liaison Coordinator, "and so when this collaborative opportunity became available, it seemed to me a great logical next step."

## National Standards

1. Welcome All Families
2. Communicate Effectively
3. Support Student Success
4. Speak Up for Every Child
5. Share Power
6. Collaborate with Community

While not the only department in the district doing family engagement work, Title I & Community Family Connections was the office with the most traction and experience. They were entrusted by their new superintendent to move forward with using ESSR funds to expand family engagement into non-Title I schools. So when JeffCo joined the FSCP Collaborative, they kept their team small. It consisted of the Director and Assistant Director of Title I & Community Family Connections and the Title I Family Engagement Liaison Coordinator.

They also identified two elementary schools who were aware of the state's FSCP Collaborative and, independent of the main team, wanted to go through the Framework's rubrics for themselves. Ultimately, it ended up being too challenging for the schools to do so due to competing priorities and a lack of time.

The team went into completing the rubrics with confidence, feeling that they had been effectively doing FSCP for a long time, but

then described the experience as “sobering” and “deflating.” They ended up rating themselves as “emerging” on many of the ratings. As they responded to the questions, Jeffco’s team members were forced to think through what their sphere of influence was as the Title I office. The team considered that while they had the support of the superintendent to do this work for the district, the real problem was that the different departments who engaged with families had separate operating philosophies around the work.

With this in mind, **Essential Element Four, Dedicate Necessary Resources**, became their priority. Rather than focusing on one single question from that element, they took into consideration all three: **How do you implement evidence-based practices to cultivate and sustain FSCP? Where are you now and where will you go (e.g., evaluation and goal setting)? How will you continually improve your family partnerships through community-based resources?** They knew they needed to learn more about what the other central departments were doing to engage with families, where they were struggling, and how they might be able to partner with one another.



**Dedicate  
Necessary  
Resources**

In the midst of this work, the district announced the creation of a new cabinet level position, Chief of Family Partnership

and Community Engagement, a major milestone for the district. This announcement forced the Collaborative team to adjust their planning and focus on the need to assess all central departments so that when the Chief started, there would be data points about how the system was prioritizing family engagement.

To gather this information, the JeffCo Collaborative team developed thoughtful questions to distribute to 28 district departments. Ten departments, including the Title I team, responded to those questions. What they found is that those departments were hungry for an interdependent FSCP structure that aligned the work across the district. For departments with a heavy focus on compliance, like special education, they were seeking a more authentic way to deeply engage with families. The most interesting finding, however, was that two-thirds of those who responded had no definition for family, school, and community partnering, despite the district having a definition that aligns with the state. This finding highlighted how, even though there were things in place at the district level, those things had not been embedded into individual district offices.

While they were collecting this information, the JeffCo Collaborative team developed parameters for where and how JeffCo schools can implement FSCP practices using an MTSS structure. These parameters have been sent to the Superintendent and Chief of Family Partnership and Community Engagement for feedback.

So, what are the next steps for the JeffCo Collaborative team? They plan to continue with the rubrics next year, and to share them with the new Chief. They also hope to have the offices who responded to their questions complete the rubrics and to expand their team by inviting those offices to join. The Jeffco Collaborative team hopes their district colleagues have a similar experience to theirs by completing an honest assessment of their FSCP practices and become willing partners as members of the team.

The JeffCo team understands that there is misperception around family engagement in their district that it only needs to happen in Title I schools with “less engaged”, “hard-to-reach” families. The team hopes that their work will shine a light on how FSCP is a universal approach for all schools that recognizes the value of families as partners in their child’s school success.



## CASE 6

## Thompson School District

Thompson School District (TSD) joined the Family, School, and Community (FSCP) State Collaborative because the timing was right. With a new superintendent in place

committed to an FSCP vision, a strategic plan with priorities that corresponded to the four essential elements of Colorado’s P-12 FSCP Framework, and the creation of a district-wide Family Engagement Coordinator role, the stars were aligned to revise their FSCP policy. Much had recently changed in their district, and now so would their vision of systems-level family, school, and community partnering.



Like many school districts, family, school, and community partnering in Thompson School District historically lived in Title One schools. With 20% of their schools operating as Title I, TSD staff knew what supports and practices were needed to “do FSCP well” at the building level. The current FSCP policy was built on the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships.

While these standards were ideal for the school and building level, they were inadequate for the systems level. TSD knew it needed a policy that impacted all buildings, all students, and all families throughout the district. This goal, however, certainly presented challenges - lack of funding, educators who believed they were already doing family engagement well, and the difficulty of implementing effective FSCP practices at the secondary level. But as a district that prioritized family engagement, TSD was prepared to meet those challenges head on.

With a newly created Family Engagement Coordinator position, TSD now had someone in place to do the necessary systems-level work. Joining the Collaborative provided an opportunity for the Coordinator to see where other districts were with their FSCP work and if they faced similar challenges. She valued the support from the state as well as peers from other districts who faced similar FSCP challenges. Connecting with other Collaborative districts also created space for feedback and “ah-ha” moments as they learned how others were utilizing the Framework and rubrics. With this support in place, TSD was ready to move forward with establishing a team that would review the rubrics, assess their district’s starting points, and begin the policy work.

Members of TSD’s FSCP Collaborative team included the district’s Federal Programs Administrator, the Family Engagement Coordinator, the District Accountability Committee’s (DAC) co-chair, two elementary school principals, one family engagement liaison, and a few secondary principals when they were able to join.

With this team, TSD was able to champion systems-level family, school, and community partnering. When the team sat down and dug into the Framework’s rubrics, it became clear that the priority for TSD could not be delineated down to just one Essential Element. The priority was clearly the policy work, and that could be found in each of the four Essential Elements. After this review, the team saw that the first thing they needed to do was revise the district’s FSCP policy. By using the rubrics and associated tools, team members were able to understand why that shift toward the Essential Elements and away from the National Standard’s was necessary for system-level work. The team worked with their stakeholders, looked through guidance from the Colorado Association of School Boards’ sample policy, utilized Colorado’s P-12 FSCP Framework, and aligned a top-level FSCP policy with the district’s strategic plan, Strive 2025. The next step was the deep work - how was the revised policy going to look in action for students, educators, and families across different school buildings?

To understand this, the Family Engagement Coordinator used this opportunity to engage shoulder-to-shoulder with their stakeholders as colleagues and dove headfirst into how the P-12 FSCP Framework correlated to what was already happening in the district, and how the Framework represented what they envisioned happening in the district.

## 4 Essential Elements



From that emerged the direct similarities of the Framework's Four Essential Elements to the district's four Strive 2025 focus areas - student achievement, stewardship of resources, inclusive supportive culture, and capacity building. It took little effort to adapt the Essential Elements to the Strive 2025 focus areas and to articulate in the revised policy practices and standards of family engagement, particularly around professional development, that address and improve student achievement.

### Ready and Waiting

Like with anything, though, the winds shift and plans change - while the policy had been revised, it had yet to be voted through. The team had originally planned to present it to the Board in December and then deploy a baseline assessment to all schools beginning in January. Unfortunately, the local board wasn't able to hold a final vote until the March meeting, six months behind schedule.

By that time, though, the FSCP team shifted their priority to implement the rubrics this year for a baseline assessment of all TSD schools' family engagement starting points. This baseline assessment will help the district-level team create short- and long-term FSCP goals at both the site- and systems-level.



The team originally planned that by the end of the 2021-2022 school year, they would use the baseline data to develop a two-year FSCP action plan for every building that is integrated into the School Unified Improvement Plan (SUIP). Instead, they used the data to inform end-of-year FSCP professional development for administrators, and will return to those action plans the following year.

As if a new FSCP policy wasn't exciting enough, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, each building will have an Implementation Team focused on the Strive 2025 priority Inclusive Supportive Culture, with FSCP as one strand. These new teams, made up of three people plus an administrator, will support schools in implementing the FSCP policy. For the Family Engagement Coordinator, who started her position without a contact list and relied on school secretaries for help with setting up tables during school events, the Implementation Teams are a huge step forward. Having multiple people at each school to contact that have the background knowledge, the motivation, and the initiative to impact their school's culture using family

engagement practices is a major win for the district and speaks to the importance of setting the foundation with a strong district-wide FSCP policy.

The Implementation Teams will now be responsible for using the baseline data to develop a two-year FSCP action plan, with the district Collaborative Team providing the data, building capacity and understanding, and providing resources for evidence-based FSCP practices. Using the Framework and rubrics as guidance documents, the Family Engagement Coordinator plans to create a tool for schools to use when planning, implementing, and evaluating FSCP practices. The ultimate goal is to provide each Implementation Team with a range of recommendations across all aspects of FSCP.

### Aiming for Saturation

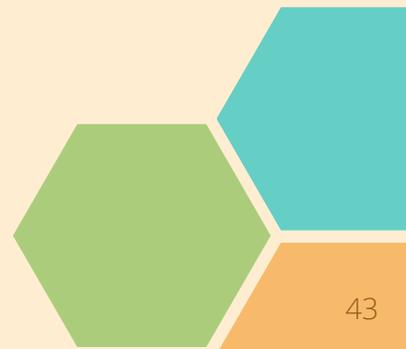
The Collaborative Team described one other outcome as “saturation.” There is no longer just one person talking about FSCP; it is the District Accountability Committee and the School Accountability Committees. It is focus groups and stakeholders of all kinds. FSCP now lives in TSD beyond Title I.

“We are now able to use what we’ve built and leverage the Framework, the work that we’ve done, and the data we’ve collected to get after implementation in an organized, stepwise way with dedicated personnel at every building,” says the Federal Programs Administrator, Cheryl Cook.

This work does not come with a stopping point. The Collaborative Team will continue on, catching up with their original timeline and returning to the protocols of the rubrics. There are more discussions to have, more digging-in to do, particularly at the building level.

The Team will continue to collect baseline data until they have all schools represented, and in the following year, will support the school Implementation Teams with tools and resources as those smaller teams implement FSCP as one strand of a supportive, inclusive culture.

TSD was primed to join the Collaborative because they were ready for the hard work. Digging into and revising a district-wide policy, and then sharing practices and standards to go along with that policy, is not easy. But with everything they were able to accomplish in one year, TSD can be proud of the progress they have made in making family, school, and community partnering a “must have” as opposed to a “nice to have.”



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