

Ambassadors Program

Escuela Bilingüe Pioneer School

Lafayette, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education



The Covid-19 pandemic led many families to feel they lacked access to their child's school, creating a separation that had not been there before. Escuela Bilingüe Pioneer, a 90/10 dual immersion bilingual school, wanted to create a pathway for recruiting more families and allowing families to feel a greater sense of community, once enrolled. The goal was for families to not feel reluctant or intimidated to engage with school staff. Last year, several Families and Educators Together (FET) moms who had moved here from another country emphasized the value of having a sisterhood and community. While they loved the FET team, they articulated that they wished they had been included and welcomed from the beginning. This revealed that the school could do much better with how they welcomed and engaged families new to the school and new to the country. This led to the Ambassadors Program.

The Ambassadors Program consisted of four major components: creating a brochure to help all families know the important aspects of the school, creating a welcome video, identifying interested FET parents who could commit to making phone calls to welcome new families when they arrived, and developing parent-led tours for new families. This model, while still in early phases, takes the load off staff and empowers parent leadership.

Ambassadors play an important role as they share information with families about the school in a direct and personal way. They provide informational resources and contact information via the brochure and help connect families with the school community liaison to receive access to other programs and opportunities. Ambassadors are approved volunteers, mostly parents, that receive training shadowing the school community liaison as the liaison provides tours to new families. Once the ambassadors are comfortable, they start leading their own tours. The ambassador school tour runs throughout the school year and is available for new and current families that would like to visit and/or become familiar with the school building and facilities. The ambassadors also make sure every new family joining the school receives a call to make them feel welcome and part of the school community. As of now, there are three volunteers (including bilingual members) that have expressed interest in serving as ambassadors for the upcoming school year, but the program is open to any parent that would like to participate. The hope is that the Ambassadors Program helps new and current families feel connected to the rest of the Pioneer community and cultivates a supportive relationship among students, parents, and staff.

The program is too new for a full evaluation just yet. However, the welcome video has been a valuable tool for recruiting families for FET teams and helping new families, particularly Spanish speaking families, feel their language and culture is valued. The brochure helps increase enrollment during a time when district-wide enrollment continues to decline. The program can be further evaluated for success by how many new families enroll. Next year, the FET team will interview some of the new parents and ask them to provide feedback on the tour and if there is any missing information from the four components. One challenge is to ensure student privacy and confidentiality as the program relies on parents reaching out to other parents.

For the Ambassadors Program to be effective, compile a group of people with a strong sense of community. Provide potential volunteers with a clear description of responsibilities and have a process to select and train ambassadors. When creating the welcome video make sure the video centers parent voices. Cultivate or identify a few parent leaders who are passionate about taking this on. Lastly, take the time to support the parent leaders in feeling comfortable and confident before they lead tours and make phone calls independently. Be very thoughtful in how to scaffold support for parent success.

Standard 1— Welcoming All Families
Essential Element 1—Create an Inclusive Culture