

Visiting with Principals

Fort Lewis College
Durango, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

The ability of teachers to cultivate strong family, school, and community partnerships is first developed in preservice training. At Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, students in the ED 329 Family and Community Relationships course learn about respectful and trusting relationships between home and school. These preservice teachers learn strategies that schools can use to build on cultural and family differences that support learning communities and networks for families.

Students in the Family and Community Relationships course are charged with becoming familiar with both the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, a framework published by the US Department of Education that guides the development of family engagement strategies, policies, and programs, and the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, published by the PTA. The cumulative assignment in the course is visiting and interviewing as a small team an elementary school principal in a local, rural school district. Based on the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, students ask principals the following questions:

- How do you build respectful and trusting relationships between your student's home and the school?
- What strategies do you employ that builds on the intellectual, social, and human capital of and cultural difference of families in your program?
- What strategies do you use to build learning communities and networks for families?
- How do you connect and work with families to the teaching and learning goals you have for students?
- Are families included in improvement strategies such as recruitment and training of teacher and school-wide evaluation and assessment?
- What other activities and opportunities for family partnerships do you employ that you would like to tell us about?

To showcase what they learned, students then created and were evaluated on a poster highlighting the interview. Students were graded on the creativity of the poster and their knowledge concerning the family-school partnering practice illustrated on the poster.

