

Parent Teacher Association Learning Series

Thomson Elementary School

Arvada, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Thomson Elementary School's Parent Teacher Association (PTA), in partnership with school staff, created and implemented a PTA Learning Series to support student success by providing learning opportunities for families. The strategy for implementing this practice is to utilize opportunities already available.

In an effort to work smarter, not harder, families and staff collaborate to transform PTA meetings from "business only" to a "Learning Series" that connect with current Family Tea gatherings. As part of Thomson's commitment to student success, during this school year, PTA and Family Tea invited guest speakers to discuss topics such as Social Emotional Development, Executive Functioning, Digital Safety, and Health and Wellness (to name a few). In addition, the school also offered opportunities to support the school-wide reading goal. Guest speakers included staff members, Jefferson Center for Mental Health, the local library, and community partners. These topics were developed in part from responses to family feedback surveys.

By offering these learning opportunities, families receive additional tools and support to implement learning at home. For example, the Digital Safety presentation provided families with access to an online screen time calculator, and the Social Emotional presentation offered families access to teacher-created videos on task initiation and organization. As a result, Thomson staff continue to see an increase in attendance by offering morning and evening learning opportunities for families (as evidenced by sign-in sheets and an increase in family volunteers).

Family feedback is routinely requested to determine topics offered as a means to elevate the commitment to student success within the National Standards for Family-School Partnership. Thomson's biggest area of opportunity for improvement lies in earlier planning. In order to have smoother implementation, staff will begin the planning process earlier in the school year so that organizers can inform families well in advance of their learning opportunities. Additionally, school staff plan to solicit teacher feedback in developing topics so that we can continue to connect classroom learning to at-home learning.

Thomson's family engagement liaison offers the following advice to other schools wanting to implement a similar practice: "An important strategy that we would like to share with others is to thoroughly assess what resources are already available. In Thomson Elementary's case, we chose to strengthen and utilize systems already in place, and the expertise of families, community, and staff. By working smarter, not harder, we were able to establish practices that can be built upon year after year to support student success."