

FACE Centers

Denver Public Schools

Denver, CO



The mission of Denver Public Schools (DPS) is to provide all students the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens in our society. DPS is committed to meeting the educational needs of every student and their family through impactful and innovative partnerships that address the need of the whole family. The Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Centers aim to mitigate stress factors of families living in poverty by providing supportive services to families that increase financial independence and family stability ultimately decreasing generational poverty. Multi-generation strategies remove barriers for families, allowing them to engage more deeply with their children. Through this inclusive approach, DPS is able to increase support for the whole child, which results in families having stronger trust with the school and being better equipped to support student achievement and school readiness.

In a 2013 citywide parent survey developed by the DPS FACE team, 17,400 respondents indicated a need for job training, English as a Second Language (ESL) services and financial planning. As a result, the FACE Center was established to offer free wraparound services to students, families, and community members. An advisory group of community agencies supported the design of the program in 2013. Since that time, the FACE Centers have grown from one location serving approximately 100 participants to two locations serving over 1,500 participants annually. Community partners that provide services at the FACE Centers include the Mental Health Center of Denver, Operation HOPE, Clayton Early Learning, Denver Human Services and CREA Results. The FACE Centers also partner closely with DPS schools and operations departments, including John H. Amesse and Johnson Elementary Schools, DPS Early Learning, and DPS Assessment, Reporting and Data.

FACE Centers provide free wraparound services that allow community members to obtain critical life skills to increase their economic self-sufficiency and the academic achievement of their children. Collaborative partnerships with community agencies enable FACE Centers to deliver services in the areas identified by the community as most needed, such as financial literacy, workforce development and educational classes that include English as a Second Language (ESL), parenting classes, and high-school equivalency. The FACE Center person-centered approach includes on-site support, check-ins, and access to inclusive services. Participants have access to interventions around challenges related to mental health, homelessness, special needs, and poverty. By addressing these underlying causes for unemployment and disengagement, FACE Center staff can support families' efforts to achieve financial security and stability. When families are financially secure and stable, their children not only demonstrate higher rates of attendance, but they are also better able to learn at school. Additionally, free childcare makes it possible for parents to engage in these programs and psychologists located at the FACE Centers ensure families have access to social-emotional and mental health support.

The FACE Centers utilize a person-centered approach to participant intake, engaging participants in goal setting. Participants complete a Family Success Plan upon entry that assists in guiding their individualized case management needs and goals. They are supported throughout their time at the FACE Centers with follow-up meetings, based on the need of the individual participant, but at a minimum every six months. Data is tracked throughout the life cycle of a participant utilizing Salesforce and evaluated with the support of the DPS Assessment, Reporting and Data support team. Evaluation includes progress towards goals of individual

clients, as well as impact on student attendance, achievement and satisfaction. FACE Centers also conduct on-going surveys from participants to assess efficacy of services and promote continuous improvement.

After two years of FACE Center operations, it became apparent that many of the goals of participants and families were not achievable unless social emotional supports were available. To this end, FACE developed a partnership with the Mental Health Center of Denver to contract services for full-time mental health therapists at both sites. Work with the host school administration is also critical to the FACE Centers' success. Through buy-in from the school administration, FACE was able to advertise services directly to teachers and staff who are in contact with parents and guardians on a daily basis and who know the families best.

The FACE Center approaches wraparound services based on the individualized goals of each participant. Each participant requires unique tools and resources in their path to self-sufficiency. One of the main success factors of the FACE Center program model is the authenticity of services and staff ability to support participants in defining their own goals and supporting the participant in creating their individualized action plan. The program is based on a person-centered approach to building a trusting and welcoming environment that asks for feedback from participants to continue program improvement and assess any new needs. Staff engage in ongoing professional development to ensure that services are being delivered with the highest standards of professionalism and excellent customer service.

Ayako Williams, a current DPS parent and now an Enrichment Coordinator for DPS notes: "All the people that are working there [FACE Center] are so welcoming. They make you feel like you're a part of a family. Tristan [Workforce Coach] raised my confidence level to where I felt like I could get any job. He makes you feel so calm and confident that you know you are going to come out of the FACE Center successful."