

Knowledge at Parents' Fingertips

Cherry Creek Independence Elementary School

Aurora, CO



Staff at Independence Elementary recognize the importance of building strong relationships with families in order to optimize student outcomes. Two ways that Independence staff have guided families to support learning at home are semi-monthly talks and weekly podcasts.

The programs were planned by the community liaison, Lucia Wirths, and approved by the principal, Lisa Morris. The community liaison wanted to help the parents grow as individuals and to help them support their children, so she came up with these ideas to educate them on the topics needed to accomplish that.



Twice a month for an hour, families would get together with specialists, such as psychologists and social workers, to talk about different topics. Families selected the session themes, which included relationships, forgiveness, managing emotions, and child behavioral issues.

The meetings take place in Independence's conference room. The meetings begin with a planned speaker sharing information on the pre-determined topic for 15-minutes. Families spend the remaining 45-minutes asking questions and sharing experiences.

Along with the semi-monthly talks, the school send podcasts to all families in English and Spanish every Friday. The podcasts came from PIN (Parent Information Network) and BBVA-Aprendamos Juntos. The themes of the podcasts included information about parenting, supporting children, stress, anxiety, ADHD, Dyslexia, and personal growth. These talks and podcasts help educate the parents about how to support their children, therefore helping both students and parents.

These programs' evaluation is ongoing. For the monthly talks, the parents give verbal feedback and complete a survey about the talk. For the weekly podcasts, parents send feedback via email about the podcasts and the themes they covered.

If someone were to recreate something similar to these programs, they should use apps such as *Remind* to help parents remember to go to the talks. If they wanted to recreate just the talks, they should "let the parents decide what topics they would like to speak about," says the community liaison, Lucia Wirths, "this is important because they will be motivated to participate a lot." Also, they should use translator apps such as Microsoft translator if the people in the room don't all speak the same language. If someone wanted to do just the weekly podcasts, they should try to create transcripts of the podcasts. Mrs. Wirths says this is important because "if there are parents who cannot listen to them, they can still learn about the topics." With both programs it is important to constantly receive feedback from the parents to make sure they are interested.