

# Community Helpers in Afterschool Programs

## Edwards Elementary School

### Edwards, CO

The latest evolution in YouthPower365's PwrHrs Afterschool programming in Eagle County schools has led to the development of project-based learning. The goal of this new programming was for the afterschool program students to be exposed to new experiences and community helpers (aside from the traditional ones of first responders), hear perspectives and experiences from different community members, and be able to participate in the presentations. Community Helpers included painters, plumbers, electricians, and custodians.

The "Community Helper" program was piloted at Edwards Elementary School, where the [YouthPower365](#) (YP365) Elementary Program Administrator knew many of the families and supported their participation as Community Helpers. "It was incredible the response from the community members, how engaged they were. Everyone wanted to come and just present to the students about the work that they do."

The Edwards Elementary Afterschool teachers and site coordinators met with the YP365 program administrator to plan the goals, expectations, roles, and parameters for the "Community Helpers" program. The YP365 program administrator then reached out to families to dialogue with them about the program. It was important to share the idea and its importance and to listen to what each Community Helper needed to make their experience comfortable and successful. Once there was commitment from a community helper, it was plugged into the afterschool program schedule. This allowed teachers to talk to their students prior to the event. It was noted that after meeting and hearing about the work of the elementary school custodian, the students made the effort to greet her and do their part in keeping the school and classrooms clean.



Each Community Helper ended their session with questions to both assess learning and deepen the student's understanding. The team prevented challenges by holding conversations with the Community Helpers to ensure that they felt welcomed, supported, and part of the team. It is recommended that the connector, who in this experience was the YP365 program administrator, needs to be present during the "Community Helper" program. Being present and walking alongside the Community Helper builds confidence and motivation.

A classroom teacher, who was also an after-school instructor, shared, "The community presenters were all natural teachers who share their community professions with pride and engaging, hands-on presentations. This allowed students to have a personal awareness and appreciation of their community members while also having invaluable exposure to educational and future career pathways. The students demonstrated appreciation and understanding through a unique experience."