

Cooking with Families

Poudre High School

Fort Collins, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

Poudre High School has utilized Cooking with Families over the last four years to create a more inclusive and welcoming culture for all families. Initially the program was held in a school member's home; the program has since expanded and takes place in the school kitchen.



The Poudre High School community believes student success is related not only to grades and graduate rates, but also to how connected, supported, and motivated students feel. Students feel most comfortable in a safe learning environment with teachers and staff that are open-minded and aware of diversity and inclusion. Poudre High School has the largest enrollment of Hispanic students within the Poudre School District. Cooking with Families was created to provide an inclusive and family friendly atmosphere. The program provides community members (students, staff, families, etc.) with the opportunity to volunteer, learn, and express respect for the



Hispanic culture and their cooking traditions. A volunteer from the Hispanic community teaches other members of the school community how to cook a complete meal from their country. During this event, students from Poudre High School and other family members take time to talk about their country and why the dish they are teaching others to prepare is important to them.

The Family Liaison partnered with the Assistant Principal, Activity Director, and the Family Consumer Sciences Department to implement the program. The Family Liaison contacts students and families that are interested in volunteering and works with them to select a menu from their country that they would like to prepare (i.e., beverage, appetizer, entree, and dessert). These details, along with the date and time of the event, are emailed out to all members of the school community. The Family Liaison then meets with the volunteer to create a budget and buy all the needed ingredients and materials for the event. The day of the event, a family style table is set up to serve the meal. The volunteer introduces the participating community members to facts about their country as well as the meal they are preparing. The volunteer then leads the community in various steps and rotating stations to prepare the meal. Once complete, the community celebrates and eats together. They present a gift card and thank you note to the volunteer, expressing gratitude for sharing their culture.



Students and families who have participated in the program mentioned how much more comfortable they feel at school knowing school members are open to learning about their culture and value their culture and traditions. The program has also allowed students to feel more comfortable communicating with their teachers and allowed various members of the community to interact with each other, who may not have otherwise. Teachers and staff who have participated in the program mentioned how much they value the time invested with their students. They appreciate learning about

Standard 1 — Welcoming All Families
Essential Element 1— Create an Inclusive Culture

their students' culture and traditions and enjoy having the ability to step back from their professional roles and learn and engage with their students and families.



Helpful tips for those who wish to replicate this program include being aware of attendees' allergies and intolerances to help create an inclusive menu that everyone can enjoy. The program can be flexibly held at school or other community members' homes. To help commemorate the event over the years, as well as include others who do not have the chance to participate, consider creating a recipe book for attendees and the school community.