

Welcoming and Connecting Newcomer Families

Columbine Elementary School

Boulder, CO



Columbine Elementary School, located in the Boulder Valley School District, welcomed more than 30 families from Mexico and Venezuela during the fall of 2023. The Families and Educators Together (FET) Team, the Parent Teacher

Association (PTA), and [Family Resource Schools](#) (FRS) collaborated to create opportunities for newcomer families to access resources and to foster relationships with members of the larger community and the school.

Three informational sessions took place throughout the second semester. The first session was focused on resources for families to meet their basic needs, such as shelter, food, clothing, and health. The school invited community organizations to participate, including El Centro Amistad, BVSD Health Services, Clinica Family Health, and Emergency Family Assistance Association (EFAA). The second session was focused on the employment process and opportunities with WorkForce Boulder County. They provided guidance on how to apply for a job, job requirements, and how to prepare for an interview. The final session focused on legal services to answer questions families had. A team from The Immigrant Legal Center of Boulder presented to the families.

Bridging Digital Divides facilitated a basic computer skills class for Columbine Elementary families to navigate the Boulder Valley School district website and parent portal. Each family received a free Chromebook.

A group of parents also created the Buenas Amigas Group. This group reached out to newcomer families and identified specific needs to start their lives in the United States. They connected with a neighborhood church to collect furniture, clothing, and food for the families. Staff were able to create a small “store” in the school for families to “shop” for free.

At the end of the school year, Columbine Elementary staff asked for feedback. The newcomer parents expressed their gratitude for all of the welcoming support they received this year. The families felt welcomed and connected to the school community.

To replicate this experience, Columbine Elementary staff recommend inviting parents from the school community to create a plan of action. As soon as possible, survey the new families to find out what their needs are.