

Families and Educators Together (FET) Team

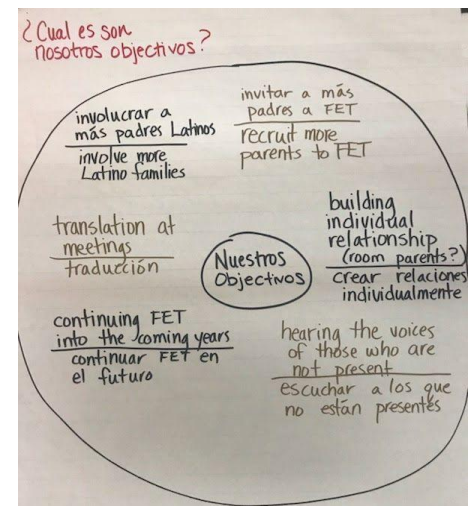
Whittier International Elementary School

Boulder, CO



In recent years, Boulder Valley School District began implementing a Families and Educators Together in Schools project in which different schools piloted FET Teams to develop deeper, more authentic relationships between parents and educators. In the 2018-2019 school year, the staff and parents at Whittier transformed the staff-based Parent Involvement Committee into the Families and Educators Together Committee (FET).

The committee was co-chaired by one parent and one teacher and was made up of four additional staff members and eight additional parents. From the on-set of implementation, the co-chairs were supported and received training from the district's Director of Family Partnerships and met bi-monthly with other co-chairs from other FET Teams in the district. The principal of the school, and the Family Resource Schools program coordinator were key supporters in recruiting parents to the committee and supporting our work in the initial year.



In the inaugural year, the FET team focused on (1) recruiting parents from our minority communities to attend meetings and (2) developing a strong foundation of relationships with those parents so they felt confident and comfortable in openly sharing their ideas and opinions around school improvement. In the first months, we developed committee values and expectations, and more importantly created space for staff and parent members to connect through *dinámicas*, collaborative activities to promote trust and cohesion within the group.

FET's goals became three-fold: in the short term, to have staff expand their methods of communication to be more inclusive through experimenting with the use of translated texts, phone calls home and home-school journals; in the long term, to vertically align the way in which teachers communicate with families; and finally, finding ways to better connect parents of different backgrounds with one-another.

Evaluation of Whittier's work was largely based on feedback from the district director, our committee members, school staff, and other FET teams in the district. Takeaways included:

- Don't be afraid to start slow, building a foundation of trust before rushing into projects.
- Put the voices of the parents first and create ways for all voices to be heard in meetings.
- Parent involvement isn't about creating events for parents to attend, but rather finding authentic ways for parents to comfortably and regularly express their thoughts and opinions with school staff.