

# 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Transition Event

## Boltz and Leshar MS/ Fort Collins HS

### Fort Collins, CO



Poudre School District (PSD) considers school transitions a priority. Middle to high school transition is an important time for families and students to learn about the changes to come and prepare for the next four years. The transition event focuses on helping culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) families become familiar with how to navigate the school district, be knowledgeable about student programs and opportunities for student involvement and learn how to acquire credits towards graduation. Families and students receive a roadmap for how to best take advantage of school programs that will lead their teens towards post-secondary readiness.

In general, PSD schools offer a variety of transition events that are often focused on engaging 8<sup>th</sup> grade students during daytime high school visits and evening open house events. However, this event caters to culturally and linguistically diverse families and students, so they can have a dedicated time to engage with school staff and administration, via an interpreter, and become acquainted with their new school.

A team of family liaisons, teachers, counselors, school administration, and the IT department coordinated the evening with Boltz Middle School, Leshar Middle School, and Fort Collins High School. Families attended an information session that a counselor presented in English with Spanish interpretation. Families followed along with a bilingual PowerPoint, and a Q&A occurred in both languages. All families received program and high school written information in English and Spanish.

One outcome of this event is that families received information and training about the school application ParentVue. This resource helps guardians monitor their student's class schedule, grades, attendance, and email teachers. PSD staff helped families download the application on their phones and walked them through the tool. Students then go on a tour of the school led by high school peers, and at the end of the information session, families can walk around the high school hallways. Most importantly, this event connects middle school families and students to their new school staff, counselors, fellow students, and their high school family liaison who will be their right hand for the next four years to graduation.

At the end of the event, families complete a survey to provide feedback. Family Liaisons also receive many follow-up phone calls, asking clarifying questions about next steps and school programs. In general, feedback is positive, and families appreciate learning about the school system and feeling ready for high school to begin.

PSD's family engagement specialist offers the following advice about replicating this program: "Ideally, a transition event should take place towards the end of the school year. At this point families and students are mentally more prepared for the upcoming transition and are ready to receive new information about their new high school. Based on the attendance list, Family Liaisons at Boltz and Leshar Middle Schools followed-up with families who did not attend the event to assure they received the same information. It's always a good idea to have snacks and fun, prize raffle, and end with a survey about the event. One of them most vital elements to hosting a well-attended event is make the time on their calendars in the weeks before the event to make personal phone calls to all 8<sup>th</sup> grade families to explain the importance of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade transitions."