

# Shout Outs

## Foothills Elementary School

### Lakewood, CO



COLORADO  
Department of Education

Staff at Foothills Elementary School, located in Jeffco Public Schools, understand the importance of teaching the whole child. In order to foster positive social-emotional learning, a planning committee (staff, community partners, PTA officers, Partners in Education (PIE) members, principal, Family Engagement Liaison) instituted Foothills Shout-Outs. The goal is to promote positive reinforcement that celebrates specific character traits that are practiced at school and at home.

Foothills Elementary encourages eight character traits: Zest, Social Intelligence, Curiosity, Growth Mindset, Self-Control, Grit, Optimism, and Gratitude. The creed of the school and the eight character traits are interwoven to heighten the practice of positive reinforcement and recognition that encourages students and adults to soar and achieve the character traits within themselves.

The most important aspect of the Foothills Shout-Outs is the social-emotional outcome for students. Shout-Outs meet the whole child by pointing out precisely which character trait he or she has achieved through actions and words. Students achieve Shout-Outs through positive phone calls home, postcards home, and public acknowledgement at morning meetings.



Even though students are at the center of this communication practice, staff and families see clear benefits as well. School staff now have an outlet to develop positive relationships with families. Families feel compelled and empowered to be more responsive and encouraged to take an active role in reinforcing their child to be a *Character Champion* at home and at school. Foothills Shout-Outs breaks the cycle of families being on the end of a negative phone call home. The result is a healthy partnership built on trust between school and home. These newly formed bonds of trust facilitate effective communication between home and school.

In addition to sending regular Shout-Outs home, Foothills also held a Shout-Out Pep Rally. Over 60 families attended. During the rally, families “shouted out” to teachers, teachers “shouted out” to families, and kids “shouted out” peers, families, and teachers. Foothills’ family liaison states: “When you can give a child a ‘pat on the back’ in front of their peers and teachers for having ‘Self-Control’ (1 of the 8 Character Traits) they can now see the power positive behavior holds and they gain a great sense of pride in themselves.”

Standard 2--Communicating Effectively