

# Adult English and Spanish Classes

## Maplewood Elementary School

### Greeley, CO



At Maplewood Elementary School, the goal of the Adult English and Spanish classes was to bring families together and support their communication with one another, as well as with staff.

Terra Peña, Maplewood's Parent & Family Advocate; Sarah Mireles, a CLD teacher; Debbie Wellborn, a CLD teacher; and Laura Sneesby, a 4th grade teacher and 21st Century lead, were the main implementers of the Adult English and Spanish classes. The team surveyed families to gauge interest in English classes for the 23-24 school year. Terra recruited families for both English and

Spanish classes. She kept in contact with all families participating in classes and followed up with them if they missed a class. Sarah and Debbie both developed curriculum for the classes and taught the English classes. Laura brought students and families together to support family activities with adult learners. Ramon Reyes, Maplewood's principal, played an important role with programming. He provided support in regular meetings, provided space and materials, and participated in the end-of-year recognition event for participants.

With more interest from families than expected, the group decided to provide English classes on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Over 35 adult learners attended the 2-hour class. Participants engaged in beginner conversational English phrases. The instructors were flexible with the curriculum, meeting the needs and requests of the students. Spanish classes ran simultaneously with English classes on Tuesday nights. Most participants in the Spanish classes were school staff members, along with some families that wanted to learn Spanish. In the last 20 minutes of Tuesday's classes, both Spanish and English classes came together to practice their language skills.

The main challenges were how to create an environment for both learning groups to work together, as well as the time of year classes were offered. The group strategically planned classes during the Fall of 2023 and rolled out class opportunities in January. The classes ended in April because many families had more work opportunities with daylight savings time.

The impact on families was more confidence to walk into the school to support their child's learning, more attempted communication between families and staff, and a slight increase in parent-teacher conferences. Spanish class participants stated they were excited to connect with families in the English class. Conversations began to happen during drop-off and pick-up, which normally didn't happen because of the language difference. Participants said they felt "safe" to try and converse with a Spanish-speaking family in the English class knowing that both were learning a new language. English class participants wanted more classes. English class participants also said they were more comfortable conversing with staff members in the building. The students enjoyed having the adults in the building learning alongside them.

To replicate this practice, the most important thing is to have a good team that works well together and has the same goal for the school community.