

FET/PTO Community Building Team

Fireside Elementary School

Louisville, CO



The goal of the FET/PTO Community Building Team was to bring FET ([Families & Educators Together](#)) and PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization) together in a project that would benefit the whole community by forging stronger connections between a diverse array of families.

The leaders of FET and PTO met to discuss initial ideas and then shared with each team. A meeting was held with those who were interested in joining the FET/PTO Community Building Team. They discussed what they wanted to accomplish and set a plan moving forward. A webpage was created on the FET and PTO websites, where they could document ideas, collaborate, and share essential documents.



The FET/PTO Community Building Team settled on three goals for the year:

1. Develop the [Ambassadors Program](#) by matching new families to established families as a source of support and information, and an avenue of connection. This program puts FET families into leadership positions, connects them with PTO, and helps make the school community stronger and more welcoming to all new families. This program also works to break down language or cultural barriers that exist for some families.
2. Create structures for more opportunities for families to connect with one another outside of school. A volunteer from each grade level sent out an invitation for all parents to join a WhatsApp grade level chat group. Through the app, caregivers in the same grade could ask questions about grade level/school happenings, share information about exciting things happening in the community, or share invitations to connect.
3. Creating more social engagement opportunities for families outside of school. Events were planned and advertised at FET meetings, in the school newsletter, and with School Messenger email/text notifications. Some examples of events are parents' night out or family events at the climbing gym or roller-skating rink.

The FET/PTO Community Building Team was evaluated by the amount of participation and feedback that was collected from participants. The Team did receive positive feedback, but participation was limited. They hope that voicing these positive experiences will encourage more participation next year and in years to come. In addition, they did not start this new practice until partway through the school year. They hope to start the new school year with more momentum and direction, resulting in more participation and creating a more substantial effect on the community.

For those wanting to replicate this practice, it is recommended to consider the barriers that might prevent people from participating. For example, when people first move to a new place, they are often overwhelmed and may not respond to an invitation to connect. It is helpful to reach out on multiple occasions, with the caveat that it is acceptable to decline the invitation. It is also important to consider the language or cultural barrier that may exist for some families. Matching families with similar language or cultural backgrounds will help with the success of the program.