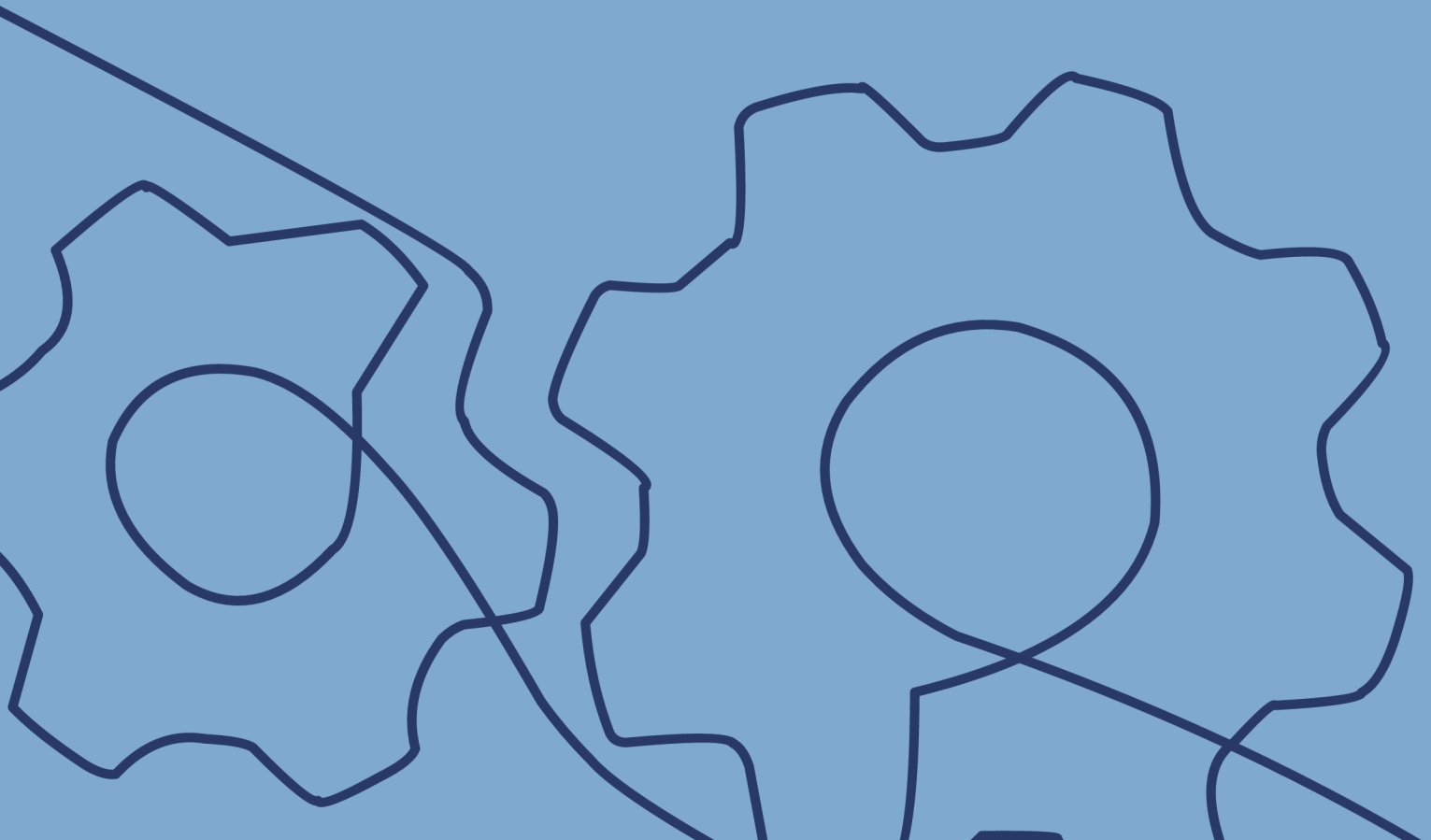




STORIES OF IMPACT & INNOVATION

IN COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOL
INSTITUTE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS



This publication was developed by the CSI School Programs Team, whose expertise and collaboration made it possible to highlight these powerful stories of innovation and impact from across the CSI portfolio.

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INTRODUCTION

At the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI), we define innovation as the intentional design and sustained execution of strategies that improve outcomes for students, particularly those who have been historically underserved.

Building on our Innovative Schools Guidebook, this collection of vignettes showcases how schools across the CSI portfolio bring innovation to life—expanding access through flexible calendars and transportation solutions, deepening learning through targeted academic and social-emotional supports, and strengthening school culture through safety, belonging, and community partnership.

At CSI, we are proud to champion school-level ingenuity, share promising practices, and strike a balance between flexibility and accountability. Together with our schools, we are redefining what's possible in public education.



I. EXPANDING ACCESS FOR ALL

Academy of Arts & Knowledge

Fort Collins, Colorado

Promising Practice: Flexible Calendar and Community Learning Center Expand Access and Increase Enrollment

Grades Served: K–5

OVERVIEW

The Academy of Arts & Knowledge (AAK) has developed an innovative, family-centered school calendar paired with a **free Community Learning Center (CLC)** program that supports students before and after school, during breaks, and over the summer. Designed with input from both families and staff, AAK's calendar and extended learning options reflect a **community-driven approach to access, equity, and wellness**.



The calendar itself mirrors the number of instructional days found in nearby districts but redistributes breaks to offer **a full week off in October and May**, along with an extended winter and spring break. Families appreciate the ability to travel during non-peak times—when it's less crowded and more affordable—while students and teachers benefit from reduced burnout and increased attendance.

In order to address the need for childcare during non-standard breaks, **AAK created the Community Learning Center (CLC)**. AAK's **CLC is free to all enrolled families** and is open most days school is not in session (with the exception of major holidays and staff PD days). It runs from **7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.**, creating reliable coverage for working families and a continuity of support that strengthens student connections to school.

Staffed by AAK paraprofessionals who already know the students, the CLC program avoids the disruptions common in outsourced care. Programming is engaging and expansive, featuring clubs and enrichment activities such as violin, guitar, percussion, coding, drama, GEMS (Girls in Engineering, Math, and Science), chess, soccer, and broadcasting. The school used funds from the 21st Century Grant to fund the program during the first two years of development; AAK has since absorbed the cost into the operating budget.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

AAK reports that **90% of families have used the CLC at some point**, and **75% use it regularly** before or after school. At least half of students attend during summer or school breaks. Families cite the consistent staffing and enrichment offerings as major draws. Students who participate in the CLC consistently demonstrate **increased academic growth**, and school leaders note that AAK students **do not experience the typical “summer slide”**—they return from breaks testing at or above where they left off. The flexible calendar and trusted programming have become major enrollment drivers for the school.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

A flexible school calendar can improve attendance, reduce staff burnout, and support family travel needs.

Offering a no-cost, high-quality extended learning program promotes equitable access and increases student engagement.

Staffing out-of-school time with known paraprofessionals strengthens student relationships and reduces behavioral incidents.

A wide range of enrichment activities during extended hours enhances student learning and school connections.

AXIS International Academy

Fort Collins, Colorado

Promising Practice: Transportation Reimbursement Program Expands Access for Families

Grades Served: K–6

OVERVIEW

Recognizing that **access to transportation** remains a significant barrier to school choice for many families, AXIS International Academy (AXIS) has implemented a **Transportation Reimbursement Program** to increase equitable access for students who live outside the school's established boundary. Rather than investing limited state funding into owning or contracting buses—a challenge many charter schools face due to costs and driver shortages—AXIS has opted for a **family-centered reimbursement model**.

For the 2024–25 school year, AXIS budgeted **\$20,000** (PPR/general funds—cannot use title/categorical funds) to directly offset a portion of transportation costs for eligible families. The program helps families for whom the cost or distance of daily transportation creates a hardship, ensuring that access to AXIS's educational opportunities is not determined by geography or financial means. AXIS prioritizes reimbursement funds for families qualifying for free or reduced lunch; however, all families who apply and live outside of immediate school area receive some amount of reimbursement.

Families living outside of the designated school boundary qualify for full reimbursement, while those inside the boundary can apply for a **hardship waiver** for partial assistance. Eligible families receive **per diem reimbursements** based on actual student attendance, which encourages regular school attendance and supports the integrity of the program. The process is simple: families apply once for the year, the school tracks attendance per trimester, and families receive reimbursements by mail.

The design also supports **carpooling incentives**—families with two eligible children receive reimbursement for both, which allows them to pool resources and potentially compensate carpool drivers, encouraging community-driven transportation solutions.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

In its pilot year, the Transportation Reimbursement Program has provided meaningful support for families outside AXIS's traditional boundaries. Enrollment at AXIS has increased every year since introducing the program. Additionally, chronic absenteeism rates have dropped by 11 percentage points since AXIS established the reimbursement process.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Charter schools can reallocate general operating funds toward flexible, family-centered solutions when traditional bus services aren't feasible.

A per diem reimbursement model encourages consistent student attendance.

Direct reimbursement for transportation costs reduces geographic and financial barriers to school choice.

Offering reimbursement for multiple children supports family carpooling solutions.

Ricardo Flores Magon Academy

Westminster, Colorado

Promising Practice: Team-Based Supports for Students Experiencing Housing Instability

Grades Served: K–8

OVERVIEW

At Ricardo Flores Magon Academy (RFMA), ensuring that **every student has access to stability and support**—especially those experiencing housing insecurity—is a core priority. After years of **under-identification**, where no students were officially recognized as McKinney-Vento eligible despite clear signs of need, RFMA reimagined its approach. The school transitioned from a traditional, single-liaison model to a **team-based support system**—a move that has dramatically improved both identification and service delivery.

RFMA's **McKinney-Vento team** includes four dedicated staff members who share responsibility for identifying, connecting with, and supporting students facing homelessness, housing instability, or newcomer-related challenges. This collaborative approach brings multiple perspectives, relationships, and trusted connections into the process, ensuring that more staff are equipped to recognize subtle signs that a student or family might need help. The team's presence also **reduces stigma and mitigates fear around sharing sensitive information**, making it easier for families to seek and accept assistance.

The results have been significant. Since adopting this model, RFMA has consistently identified and supported **over 30 McKinney-Vento eligible students each year**—a meaningful increase from previous years of underreporting. The team ensures that students receive immediate resources like transportation, school supplies, and food assistance while also serving as long-term advocates, helping families navigate barriers to educational stability.

By embracing **collective responsibility** and ensuring that no student slips through the cracks, RFMA has built a compassionate and responsive safety net for some of its most vulnerable learners, demonstrating that **a team-based model can transform how schools support students experiencing housing instability**.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

There has been a sevenfold increase in students and families identified as eligible for McKinney-Vento resources since the 2021-22 school year, as well as an increase in associated supports provided to eligible students. Organizationally, the school has seen an increase in staff understanding of both identification processes and available resources associated with McKinney-Vento.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Shifting from a single liaison to a team-based McKinney-Vento model improves identification and service delivery.

Multiple staff members with diverse relationships create more access points for students and families to seek support.

A collective approach reduces stigma and fear associated with disclosing sensitive information.

Schools can better meet the needs of vulnerable students when support systems are collaborative and proactive.



II. TRANSFORMATIVE INSTRUCTION

The Academy of Charter Schools

Westminster, Colorado

Promising Practice: Expanded Learning Time & Staff Retention Fuel Growth for Students With Disabilities

Grades Served: K–12

OVERVIEW

The Academy has developed a highly effective system for supporting students with disabilities by combining expanded learning time with a strong culture of staff stability and shared ownership. Students receive full universal instruction alongside their peers and then participate in additional instructional time designed to close specific learning gaps. This intensive support does not replace general education, but builds on it.

To deliver this layered approach, the school employs several full-time reading and math specialists trained in targeted intervention methods, such as the Orton-Gillingham approach for reading. The decision to prioritize staffing has created small caseloads and ensured each student receives consistent, personalized support. **Staff retention** plays a critical role in this system's success. The Academy experiences remarkably low turnover among special education teachers and interventionists, many of whom express **deep commitment to the school's mission** and long-term student growth.

Equally important is a **collaborative data culture**. Teams meet frequently in structured professional learning communities (PLCs) that include general education teachers, interventionists, and special education specialists. Together, they analyze student data, coordinate instructional strategies, and track individual progress. This team-based approach reinforces a **school-wide culture of co-ownership**—educators across roles and departments feel equally responsible for the success of all students. Additionally, staff can see data “wins” in real-time and connect the work they are doing on a day-to-day basis with positive changes in student learning outcomes. Students themselves are encouraged to set personal academic goals, contributing to a strong sense of agency and motivation.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

There were strong growth scores for students with disabilities on the 2024 CMAS assessment. Elementary students with disabilities (SWD) received a 58.5 Median Growth Percentile (MGP) on the English Language Arts section of the 2024 CMAS assessment, while middle school SWD received a 52.5 MGP.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Supplementing (not replacing) core instruction with expanded learning time increases access to grade-level content while supporting skill development.

Investing in full-time, specialized staff with manageable caseloads improves intervention quality.

Retaining staff through mission alignment and a culture of collaboration fosters consistency and strong student-teacher relationships.

Collaborative, multi-role PLCs ensure all educators are aligned around and invested in student growth.



Coperni 3

Colorado Springs, Colorado

Promising Practice: Instructional Precision Through the Immediate Intervention Leads to Strong Growth for Students with Disabilities

Grades Served: K–8

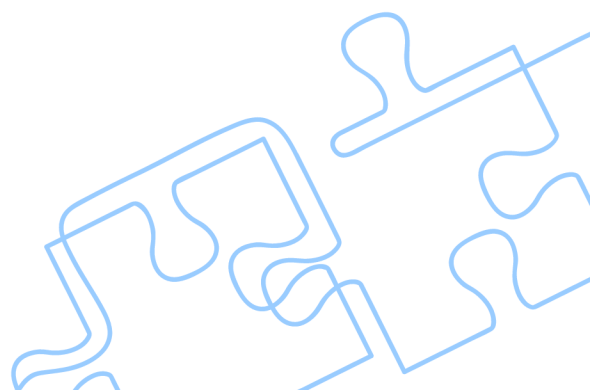
OVERVIEW

At Coperni 3 (C3), a clear instructional model guides the day-to-day delivery **of targeted academic support for students with disabilities**. Rooted in their Learning Standards-Aligned Execution (LSAE) framework, the school ensures that students first receive high-quality, standards-based instruction. For those who do not meet the learning objective, remediation occurs the same day through scaffolded small-group instruction. These supports are not generic; they are designed by curriculum specialists and tightly aligned to the core lesson objective, making interventions both immediate and relevant.

C3's success also stems from its intentional approach to staffing and professional development. The school attracts and retains educators through above-market salaries, but more importantly, it fosters a culture where **staff feel connected to student achievement**. Teachers and specialists alike cite the visible academic growth of their students as a key motivator for staying in their roles.

Professional development is not an afterthought—it is embedded into the school calendar through regular, focused training. Monthly network-wide sessions are followed by school-specific workshops. Topics are closely tied to instructional practice and data, covering areas such as increasing rigor, differentiation, and creating action plans based on NWEA results.

A hallmark of C3's culture is shared responsibility. Educators work across traditional boundaries—general education, special education, and intervention staff all collaborate with the same students. Students also play an active role in their learning by setting personal growth goals, which further builds their investment in school success.



EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

There were strong growth scores for students with disabilities on the 2024 CMAS assessment. In addition to strong growth scores for all students, middle school students with disabilities (SWD) at Coperni 3 received a Median Growth Percentile (MGP) of 56 on the English Language Arts section of the 2024 CMAS assessment.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Same-day, scaffolded remediation aligned to lesson objectives improves retention and responsiveness.

Strategic compensation and achievement-focused culture attract and retain high-impact staff.

Embedding PD and coaching into the school rhythm ensures continual instructional growth.

A culture of shared responsibility between all staff supports holistic student success.

Academy of Arts & Knowledge

Fort Collins, Colorado

Promising Practice: Universal SEL Goal-Setting Builds Student Agency and Emotional Intelligence

Grades Served: K–5

OVERVIEW

At the Academy of Arts & Knowledge (AAK), social-emotional learning (SEL) is not an isolated program or an occasional activity—it is deeply embedded into the fabric of the school’s daily life. One of the school’s most innovative and inclusive practices is ensuring that **every student sets and monitors a personalized SEL goal**, a process that fosters self-awareness, resilience, and empathy across the entire student body.

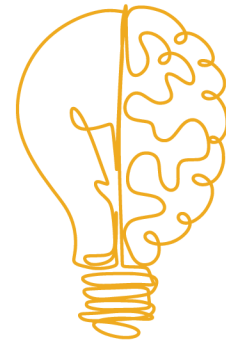
The journey begins with intentional relationship-building. Teachers conduct one-on-one conferences with each student, guiding them through a reflection of their social-emotional strengths and areas for growth. Together, they **co-create SEL goals** that are authentic, meaningful, and directly connected to the student’s daily experiences both in and out of the classroom. **This process is universal**—it is not reserved for students in targeted interventions or specific groups, but is embraced by every student in the school. By normalizing SEL goal-setting, AAK ensures that every child engages in self-reflection and growth, eliminating stigma and reinforcing that emotional development is just as important as academic learning.

A hallmark of this approach is the **whole-school alignment** around a shared SEL framework and common language, which allows students, staff, and families to engage meaningfully in conversations about social-emotional growth. Built-in weekly check-ins and reflection sessions provide consistent opportunities for students to revisit and refine their goals, while classroom discussions and journaling exercises capture both qualitative and quantitative progress.

Teachers are equipped with targeted professional development, learning to coach students through the goal-setting and reflection process. This ensures that every child experiences a sense of ownership while also receiving guidance and encouragement. By integrating SEL into the school’s culture, AAK empowers students to build the communication, self-regulation, and empathy skills they need to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Since introducing universal SEL goal-setting in the 2022-23 school year, the school has seen a downward trend in significant behavioral incidents. Teachers have become more adept at implementing and tracking social emotional interventions and student progress.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Universal SEL goal-setting normalizes social-emotional growth and reduces stigma.

One-on-one conferences foster strong student-teacher relationships and personalized goal development.

A shared SEL framework and language ensure consistency and engagement across the school community.

Regular check-ins and reflective practices make SEL growth visible and celebrated.



Colorado Early Colleges – Aurora

Aurora, Colorado

Promising Practice: Engaging Multilingual Learners Through Community and Cultural Integration

Grades Served: 9-12

OVERVIEW

At Colorado Early Colleges – Aurora (CEC Aurora), multilingual learners are thriving through **strategic community engagement, cultural experiences, and targeted academic supports**. Serving 110 multilingual students—representing 30% of its student body—CEC Aurora ranks among the highest in percentage of multilingual learners across the CSI portfolio.

Central to CEC Aurora's strategy to support academic success for multilingual learners (MLLs) are real-world learning opportunities, which extend learning beyond the classroom through **off-campus field trips**. Students visit cultural and community landmarks such as the Denver Zoo, Denver Art Museum, and local pumpkin patches to **practice social language and build academic vocabulary**. These experiences are followed by reflective assignments that bridge language learning with content classes, reinforcing new vocabulary and concepts.

CEC Aurora also prioritizes **heritage language maintenance** with a **Heritage Spanish class** that is highly attended and strategically scheduled as a first-period course to boost attendance and engagement. Additionally, the school offers a **Latin Club**, providing multilingual students with a welcoming space to connect, celebrate their cultural heritage, and build lasting community relationships. These efforts have contributed to high attendance rates, increased classroom participation, and a stronger sense of belonging among multilingual students.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

CEC Aurora's multilingual learner program has demonstrated significant success. The school's **median growth percentile of 68.0** on ACCESS assessments is well above average, and **36.54% of students are on track** to exit the English Language Development program—exceeding typical high school outcomes.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Field trips to cultural and community locations enhance language development and social integration.

Offering heritage language classes supports cultural identity and boosts student engagement.

School-based clubs create safe spaces for multilingual students to connect and thrive.

Strategic scheduling of language courses increases attendance and learning outcomes.



Colorado Early Colleges Douglas County

Douglas County, Colorado

Promising Practice: Affective Development for Gifted Learners through Gifted Seminar Courses

Grades Served: 9-12

OVERVIEW

At the secondary level, gifted education often prioritizes academic acceleration through Honors, AP, and college-level coursework, frequently overlooking the social-emotional needs of gifted students that are critical to student well-being. Research highlights that gifted students are at higher risk for anxiety, perfectionism, and social isolation, yet many find Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs) burdensome and disconnected from their personal growth. Recognizing this gap, Colorado Early Colleges Douglas County launched the Gifted Seminar I and II—**semester-long elective courses designed to address the affective development of gifted learners.**

Delivered through the school's Exceptional Student Services Unit, these seminars provide a space for gifted students to explore their unique experiences, build community, and develop executive functioning and leadership skills.

Gifted Seminar I

The Gifted Seminar I serves as an introduction to **understanding giftedness** and its impact on students' lives. The course focuses on building a sense of community among gifted students, reflecting on the social and emotional dimensions of giftedness, and engaging in deep academic exploration tailored to student interests. Through class discussions and collaborative projects, **students learn to manage stress, reduce isolation, and embrace their identities as gifted learners.**

Gifted Seminar II

The Gifted Seminar II advances this work by shifting the focus to **student-led projects**. Learners design and execute both personal and group projects aimed at solving real-world community issues, applying their academic skills in meaningful ways. The course structure is flexible, allowing students to shape the curriculum based on their interests and projects. This seminar can be repeated for additional semesters, offering fresh challenges and new collaborative experiences each time.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

The introduction of the Gifted Seminar I and II courses has led to **increased engagement among gifted students**, with many reporting stronger connections to peers and a deeper understanding of their own social-emotional needs. Participation has contributed to improved executive functioning skills, greater resilience, and a willingness to take educational risks. Teachers have observed a **reduction in anxiety-related behaviors** and an increase in student-led initiatives both inside and outside the classroom.

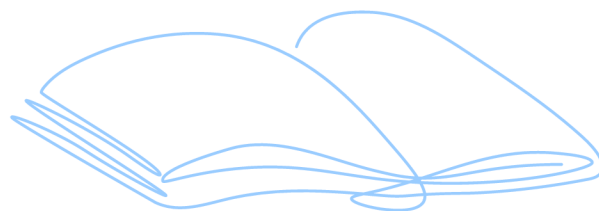
KEY TAKEAWAYS

Addressing affective development is essential for the holistic growth of gifted learners.

Creating a community of gifted students reduces isolation and strengthens peer connections.

Project-based, student-driven learning promotes autonomy, leadership, and real-world application.

Schools that prioritize both academic and social-emotional learning better prepare gifted students for post-secondary success.



III. CULTURE, SAFETY, AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

The Academy of Charter Schools

Westminster, Colorado

Promising Practice: Using Digital Pass Technology to Strengthen Campus Culture and Instructional Time

Grades Served: K-12

OVERVIEW

In response to increasing classroom interruptions and the burden placed on teachers to monitor student movement, The Academy of Charter Schools implemented a **digital hall pass system** for grades 9–12 and later extended it to include 8th grade. The tool allows students to request and manage passes on their personal devices or school-issued Chromebooks, **reducing the need for paper passes and teacher time spent managing transitions.**

The system was initially intended to ease the logistical burden on teachers, but it has had broader positive impacts on campus culture and instructional time. Students can now self-manage their transitions, track how much time they have left out of class, and take greater ownership of their movement throughout the school day. While staff still have the option to require teacher approval for a pass, the school has found success in placing that responsibility in the hands of students. As a result, **hallway traffic during instructional time has decreased significantly.**

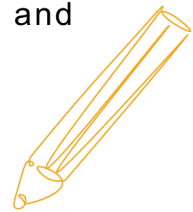
The digital hall pass system also enables schoolwide controls—for instance, limiting how many students can be out of class at any given time and setting occupancy caps for specific restrooms and water fountains. The system's detailed analytics allow administrators and staff to monitor patterns of behavior, such as missed class time, frequency of breaks, or social groupings. This has opened the door to **data-informed decisions and proactive supports.** For example, the school can implement encounter prevention plans to avoid hallway conflicts or unmonitored student gatherings.

Each student receives two discretionary passes per day, outside of passing periods. Students who require accommodations, such as walking breaks or other IEP/504-related supports, are integrated into the system confidentially and respectfully. The digital nature of the system ensures both equity and privacy in access.

At a cost of less than \$4 per student, this investment has helped maximize instructional time, strengthen student self-regulation, and provide staff with a powerful tool to support both logistics and student well-being.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

The school has seen a significant decrease in out-of-classroom time during the school day. The increase in actionable data has allowed the school team to develop proactive measures in reducing student conflict and missed instruction.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Digital hall pass systems can reduce classroom disruptions and empower student self-management.

Centralized monitoring allows schools to enforce equitable access and manage shared spaces efficiently.

Pass data provides valuable insights into patterns of missed instruction and supports proactive interventions.

Technology-based solutions can simultaneously support instruction, student safety, and school culture when implemented thoughtfully.

Global Village Academy

Thornton, Colorado

Promising Practice: Streamlining Dismissal with Tech-Enabled Safety and Learning Time

Grades Served: K-8

OVERVIEW

Like many schools, Global Village Academy (GVA) faced a daily challenge: managing the chaos of end-of-day dismissal in a way that was both efficient and safe. With students scattered across carlines, pickup areas, and sidewalks—often unsupervised—the school recognized a need for a more secure, structured approach that could also maximize the final minutes of the school day.

In response, GVA adopted a dismissal app created by a parent of a student at the school's Douglas County campus. The app **allows families to check in digitally when they arrive, which triggers an alert in the student's classroom**. Students remain safely inside, continuing instructional activities, until their ride is confirmed as present.

This innovation has had a powerful ripple effect. According to staff, **dismissal times have significantly decreased**, and safety has increased across the board. Each family has a unique code and number, giving parents peace of mind and ensuring controlled student release. Perhaps most importantly, **instructional time has expanded**. Students no longer idle outside waiting for their name to be called; instead, they remain in class using the reclaimed time for personalized learning, teacher conferencing, or catching up on homework.

As Principal Chelsea Byrd put it, "We no longer have students wasting instructional minutes. They can stay inside the classroom and learn up to the minute that their parent arrives." The school has used this time for i-Ready catch-up work, one-on-one check-ins, and academic support—turning what was once chaotic downtime into meaningful learning moments.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Shorter, more effective dismissal procedures have resulted in fewer parent complaints and more instructional time at the end of the day.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

A digital dismissal system increases safety and supervision while reducing end-of-day chaos.

Retaining students in classrooms until verified parent arrival maximizes instructional time.

Personalized codes and real-time notifications give families confidence and clarity.

Leveraging community-developed tools (like parent-designed apps) can lead to tailored, scalable solutions.



Montessori del Mundo

Aurora, Colorado

Promising Practice: Community-Driven Refinement of Mission, Values, and JEDI Commitments

Grades Served: K-8

OVERVIEW

At Montessori del Mundo (MdM), equity and inclusion are not static ideals—they are dynamic commitments, shaped and reshaped by the voices of the school community. In a bold, innovative process, **MdM invited students, families, staff, alumni, and community partners to co-create the school's mission, core values, and Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) statement.** This wasn't a one-time event or a simple survey—it was a sustained dialogue that allowed every stakeholder to reflect on what belonging, justice, and inclusion should feel like within the school walls.

Through **listening circles, focus groups, and open forums**, the school created safe spaces for honest conversations about lived experiences and aspirations. The process led to more than just refined words on a page. It catalyzed **tangible shifts in policy and culture**, ensuring that the school's guiding principles actively shaped daily life. One standout example of this is MdM's proactive policy protecting **hair autonomy and affirming cultural identity**—adopted even before the CROWN Act became law in Colorado. Recognizing the impact of hair-based discrimination on student well-being, the school formalized protections that allowed students to express their full identities confidently and without fear.

This practice illustrates how MdM translates dialogue into action, embedding community voice at the heart of its governance and culture. The school's evolving mission and values are **living documents**, constantly enriched by the diverse perspectives of those it serves, ensuring that every student feels **seen, respected, and empowered.**

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Since engaging in this process, MdM's staff survey results show a marked increase in the percentage of staff who agree or strongly agree that they feel seen, heard, and valued in their role. Additionally, there has been a marked increase in inclusive practices in the classroom, based on regular classroom observations by the leadership team. The school has also seen a marked increase in student retention at the upper grades, which historically had the highest percentage of student turnover. Finally, the school has organized a team including staff, parents, current and former students, and leadership team to develop a 25-year strategic plan. This group of stakeholders has developed a tool to measure the operationalizing of shared JEDI commitments which was a direct result of the school's initial community-driven work.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Sustained community engagement ensures that school values reflect lived experiences.

Embedding stakeholder voices into mission and policy strengthens belonging and equity.

Translating dialogue into tangible policy (e.g., hair autonomy protections) reinforces trust and cultural safety.

Justice and equity commitments thrive when treated as evolving, not static, frameworks.

Community Leadership Academy

Commerce City, Colorado

Promising Practice: Pin Ceremony Inspires Academic Achievement and Character Development

Grades Served: K-5

OVERVIEW

Community Leadership Academy (CLA) has developed a unique and innovative family engagement activity that leverages existing school structures—such as uniforms, character education, and weekly academic assessments—to celebrate student success. This initiative is anchored by the **Pin Ceremony**, held every Wednesday morning right after drop-off.

The program is built on three core components: weekly academic assessments, character education, and uniform traditions. Students wear ties with their uniforms each Wednesday, and **pins are awarded** to symbolize their achievements. The pins fall into two main categories: **Character Pins, nominated by teachers each month, and Academic Pins, earned based on progress monitoring data.**

Principal Mamie J. Howard leads this effort with a sharp focus on data and celebration. Each Monday, she reviews academic progress, prepares certificates, and coordinates with staff to sign them, all before the weekly Pin Ceremony. Parents are encouraged to attend, and many do, filling the gym with energy and excitement as students receive recognition for their hard work.

The pin program is highly structured, with clear academic targets for each grade level. For example, during the May 5th ceremony, reading pins were awarded based on word counts tracked through the Accelerated Program, book reviews, and quizzes. Specific milestones (e.g., 1,000 words in 1st grade, 10,000 in 2nd grade, up to 1 million words by 3rd grade) are celebrated with unique pins. CLA recently introduced a limited-edition pin for a math challenge, sparking even greater enthusiasm among students. According to school leader Tina Jajdelski, “If it’s worth doing, it’s worth celebrating.” The students not only know the significance of each pin they earn but also take pride in explaining them to teachers and family members.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Community Leadership Academy has maintained a **performance school rating for thirteen consecutive years** within an **underserved community**. The Pin Ceremony contributes to this success by instilling pride, motivation, and a sense of achievement in students. Parents and students alike celebrate the weekly milestones, reinforcing a culture of growth and perseverance. Observers note the students' **deep understanding of their achievements**, with many eagerly sharing the stories behind their pins and the goals they are currently striving to reach. CLA's pin program has become a cornerstone of its positive school culture, demonstrating the power of celebration and community involvement in academic success.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Using existing school structures (uniforms, character education, academic data) maximizes student and family engagement.

Weekly data monitoring and celebration maintain momentum and excitement around growth.

Positive routines, like the Pin Ceremony, foster a thriving school culture and community pride.

Regular parent attendance at ceremonies strengthens school-family connections.



Crown Pointe Academy

Westminster, Colorado

Promising Practice: Multipronged Approach to Family Engagement Strengthens School-Community Ties

Grades Served: K-8


OVERVIEW

At Crown Pointe Academy (CPA), family, school, and community engagement is not left to chance—it is a **strategically planned, multipronged approach** that permeates every layer of school culture. Guided by decades of research highlighting the transformative impact of family-school partnerships (Mapp & Henderson, 2022), CPA designed its **Unified Improvement Plan (UIP)** with family engagement as a core improvement strategy. The goal: to boost student outcomes, strengthen community bonds, and enhance school culture.

CPA's initiatives include the **CPA Family Book Club, Summer Challenges, and Café Con Pan**—each designed to engage families in academic partnering, relationship building, and shared learning experiences. CPA's Assistant Principal leads the Family Book Club and Summer Challenges, where students and families read together, discuss prompts, and receive awards for participation. Families select books online as part of this interactive reading experience, reinforcing literacy and community connection.

To deepen community ties, CPA hired a Community Liaison to run **Café Con Pan**, where parents meet regularly—both in English and Spanish—to discuss school programs, support each other, and share resources. The Community Liaison also organizes **home visits** and coordinates attendance at community events, like women's empowerment conferences, ensuring families feel seen and valued.

CPA prioritizes **ongoing communication** through bilingual social media updates, a dedicated school app, weekly newsletters, and open-door policies that welcome families as volunteers, observers, and partners. These efforts are designed to build trust and strong relationships from the first week of school onward.



EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

CPA's strategic family engagement approach has led to notable outcomes. The school boasts a **94.5% attendance rate** and holds a **Performance rating on the State Performance Framework (SPF)**. Student retention is high, with many beginning in kindergarten and continuing through 8th grade. Staff turnover remains low, and family-school relationships are thriving. Families report deeper understanding of school programs, stronger advocacy skills, and greater confidence in supporting their children's education.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

A strategic, multi-layered approach to family engagement strengthens school culture and boosts student success.

Integrating community liaisons enhances cultural connections and trust within diverse families.

Academic-focused family activities, like book clubs and summer challenges, extend learning beyond the classroom.

Bilingual communication and open-door policies foster transparency and inclusivity.

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This publication was developed by the CSI School Programs Team, whose expertise and collaboration made it possible to highlight these powerful stories of innovation and impact from across the CSI portfolio.

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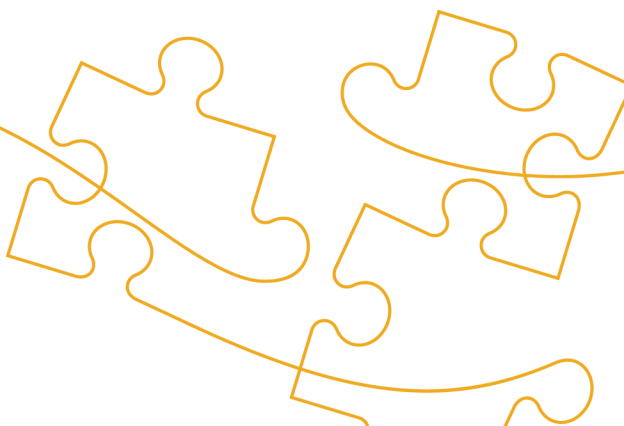
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