

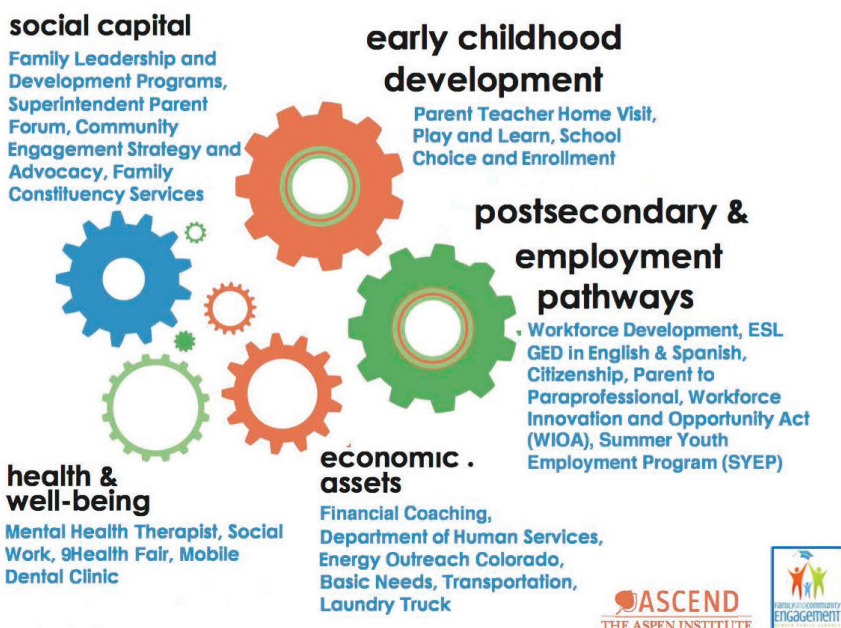


EXPANDING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Verónica Figoli, Denver Public Schools Foundation

Within our schools and the education community, the importance of “family and community engagement” is talked about a lot as a means of achieving better outcomes for students, families, and communities. Yet the reality is that during times of decreased education funding – which has been the reality for education in Colorado for generations of our children – programs that genuinely support family and community engagement are often first to be cut from budgets. If we created and committed to sustained investment in family and community engagement programs and were equally committed to tracking and analyzing the outcomes of those investments, we would be better able to refine supports, and make the case for their value. The result of this work could pave the way for a national consortium to share best practices, fully informed by data, and create a roadmap for true family and community engagement that ultimately creates opportunities for families of color and families with low incomes and strengthens communities and economies nationwide.

Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Center 2-Generation Model



*This graphic has been adapted to reflect Denver Public Schools Family and Community Engagement (FACE) centers' core components to create thriving schools where every child succeeds.

My bold vision is for change – to create a true partnership between schools and families, with a focus on two-generation strategies, and most significantly, with a concerted effort to track and analyze outcomes over the long-term. The expansion of the Center for Family Opportunity (CFO) in the Denver Public Schools to at least two more quadrants will create better services for families in areas of need. The center offers a full suite of “bundled” services using a multi-generation and family financial stability model. Services include a district employment pipeline and job training; ESL and GED classes; financial literacy; legal and immigration services; informative support for school choice; home learning tools for parents; individual and family counseling; annual health screenings; and ongoing case management.

There are now two Family and Community Engagement Centers (FACE Centers) – at Johnson Elementary in the southwestern part of the city and at John Amesse in the far northeast, which is part of the Montbello Children’s Network. These allow for great area coverage. Both FACE Centers are fully aligned with a two-generation approach.

Through a variety of staff onsite — including case managers, social workers, GED/ESL instructors, and co-located staff from partner organizations — families receive social-emotional support and build life skills as well as work skills. Centers offer families and community members workshops and one-on-one meetings with case managers and social workers with the overarching goal of achieving self-sufficiency.

Establishing trusting relationships with staff lays a foundation for successful family engagement and improved academic outcomes.

A full-time Denver Department of Human Services staff person is shared by the two locations. She reports high levels of employee satisfaction being able to operate at the FACE Centers and a greater ability to engage and get to know families. The success of her role presents an important opportunity to think about more DHS staff at schools and PEAK (benefits) kiosks.

Now that the two centers are open, we hope to document the model and collaboration process. Building allies across systems and at the leadership level will remain a priority.



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Verónica Figoli is the president and CEO of the Denver Public Schools Foundation, overseeing the strategy, operations, and fundraising and managing a \$15 million annual budget. The Foundation generates resources, builds relationships, and champions public education to impact system-wide achievement and help every child succeed.