



National Network of Partnership Schools

Promising Partnership Practices 2021



PROMISING PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES



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FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT—FACE TO FACE

TUCSON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
TUCSON, AZ

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

In the 20-21 school year, Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) set clear goals to create opportunities for all schools to conduct high-quality academic programs for students, and to ensure that all families received needed services during the pandemic. There were many challenges for schools and for families throughout the year, but the district worked persistently to resolve problems.

The Family and Community Engagement (FACE) office is responsible for guiding all schools to strengthen their partnership programs to engage all students' families. From the earliest days of the pandemic, TUSD provided food boxes for families at Family Centers located throughout the city. There are four Family Centers that serve clusters of schools in their regions. Each Center houses a clothing bank, food pantry, and a computer lab for families to use. All Family Centers connect families to health services in the community. TUSD leaders know that when family stress is reduced, parents do more to support their children's learning,

The Family Centers also conduct free classes for parents and guardians, and provide childcare for non-school age children. During the COVID-19 closures, all classes from the Family Centers were on *Zoom* and were recorded for parents to access at convenient times. This enabled some parents to take advantage of these services who could not do so when they had to go to the Centers in person.

Family Center Liaisons often were the main contacts for families. They made personal phone calls to see if families needed particular resources. They listened to parents' concerns about their children, online learning, problems with technology, and family health problems.

The FACE office, which oversees the Family Centers, used the district communication system, *Parent Vue*, to send messages and a monthly newsletter to families. FACE maintained a live communication platform, *FACE-to-Face*, for parents to send their questions and concerns, and

for the district to respond. District leaders, staff, and community partners were invited speakers in *FACE-to-Face* sessions for families to gain information and ask questions. Over 100 parents participated in various online sessions with the FACE office during the year.

The online channel also provided information and learning resources for families to use at home with their children. *FACE-to-Face* sessions reinforced the district's commitment to strengthening partnership programs and practices in all schools and with all families, regardless of students' grade levels or families' racial, socioeconomic, or linguistic backgrounds.

FACE conducted four professional development sessions last year for Community Liaisons who connect with families and with schools. The training and information sessions on family engagement may be accessed online at any time by TUSD teachers and staff. FACE also offered ideas to teachers on how to use *Zoom* to connect with more of their students' families than in the past. District leaders created a Facebook page for schools to share videos and other communications with families. These activities aim to ensure that everyone in TUSD is aware of the district's policy on and commitment to strong partnerships with all students' families in ways that support and advance student learning.

All members of the FACE staff played important roles in advancing partnerships, including the Director, Coordinator, Family Center Liaisons, and tech support and custodial staffs. During the COVID-19 year, FACE considered itself the district's "heart department." It was there that the district demonstrated its care for each other and for the students and families in TUSD.

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