ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Our Vision:
Schools, networks, and districts welcome and support families as equal partners in the design and implementation of systems and tools to ensure the highest quality educational opportunities for all students.

Our Mission:
Foster an ecosystem of schools and districts throughout the state working in partnership with activated families to achieve excellent educational experiences and outcomes.

Current Role of Family Engagement:
The current reality of the education landscape in Colorado and across our country is that family engagement is not widely understood as an essential component to a quality school. Despite 40+ years of research to the contrary, a majority of individuals and institutions throughout the education space view family engagement as a “nice-to-have” instead of a “need-to-have”. Inevitably, we can trace the roots of this orientation back to three core realities:

1) Not all leaders fundamentally believe families, students, and educators have the will or ability to be effective academic partners.

2) Effective family engagement work is not prioritized, particularly through state, district, and school spending.

3) Many practitioners lack the understanding of how high-impact strategies for family engagement are designed and implemented.

Looking Forward:
In order to achieve the educational outcomes that our students and families deeply deserve, we believe that an ecosystem approach is essential. Just as it is critical to open up entrenched systems of power to create space for meaningful community voice, so too must we have activated parents, families, students, and educators primed to lead the change when those spaces are opened.

Climb Higher is ideally suited to address these gaps because of our expertise, our existing infrastructure, and our relational trust. Additionally, through our broader coalition and specifically through our work with community-facing partners, we work to address systems-level change.

We know the research and the practice of what makes family engagement high impact. We have designed and implemented similar initiatives within the state’s largest public school system and have partnered with the nation’s leading family engagement foundation to apply lessons learned in our local context at levels throughout the education ecosystem.

Climb Higher has the existing infrastructure to connect families to the networks and opportunities they deserve. This unparalleled level of access, in combination with a deep and nuanced understanding of the who, what, and how of the education policy process, puts CHC in a position of maximum impact to integrate activated parents and families into existing power structures.

Since its inception, CHC has recognized that our success is predicated on the buy in and trust of our partners. We have invested deeply in understanding the unique needs of each partner and providing the appropriate supports accordingly. We provide a unique and valued space in which collaboration can take place and this consistency and alignment has led to extensive buy-in.
**Key Areas of Focus within Engaging Communities:**

1) Enable the conditions for families and educators to work together as academic partners toward a shared goal of student success.

2) Build a pipeline of activated families, students, and educators that are primed to collaborate effectively with Climb Higher’s broader coalition to identify, develop and implement improved educational policies.

**The Progression:**

In order for families, students, and educators to position themselves for maximum impact at the heart of the educational policy process, they must have the requisite access, skills, and resources. Research conducted through existing partnerships with Denver Public Schools has affirmed that the way families, in particular, cultivate those skills and resources is by following a progression of academic partnership that moves from the home to the school and eventually to the district or broader community.

**How the Pieces Fit:**

Climb Higher Colorado’s family engagement supports simultaneously address the needs of the individual/local as well as the collective/system levels. By empowering families through academic partnership opportunities while working with schools, districts, community organizations, and policy makers to set the conditions for those same families to lead and influence, Climb Higher facilitates the transformation of the education policy process.

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**CURRENT**

- Parents feel unwelcome in schools
- Families viewed as unable to understand standards or curriculum
- Parents don’t have access to student and school performance data or strategies for improvement linked to learning
- “Cooperative” parents are asked to make superficial decisions about the school

**Collective - System**

- Relationship between schools and families is characterized by blame and mistrust
- Parents are only brought into leadership conversations as “token” members
- Families expressing concern or asking questions are seen as agitators and marginalized by established power structures

**Individual - Local**

- Parents have an active and meaningful presence in the school building and have open dialogue with school staff and leadership
- Parents have consistent access to relevant and accurate student and school performance data
- Parents are viewed and supported as essential partners for learning and academic success
- Diverse range of families are actively involved in meaningful decision-making

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**CLIMB HIGHER COLORADO’S FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SUPPORTS**

- Relationship building through home visits
- Parent leadership
- Coaching of school leadership and staff
- School governance development
- Strategic planning

**FUTURE**

- Families drive the work of advocating on behalf of their school and community – identifying issues, crafting solutions, and implementing them
- Families collaborate with community organizations and policymakers to build collective power toward advancing student success
- Families assume leadership within school and community governance structures

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*Model supported by research of Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp

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**Our Current Partners:**

![Partner Logos]