

# AMPED Nights Traylor Academy Denver, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Traylor Academy, an ECE-5th grade school, is nestled in southwest Denver between a middle and high school. In the 2022-23 school year, a major Denver Public School goal was to create safe and welcoming environments for students and the community. Traylor students and families also completed a survey and results indicated the community desired more arts-based programming. These two factors were the driving forces behind AMPED Nights. AMPED Nights were a grassroots creation from the wants and needs of all stakeholders in the community. AMPED is an acronym for Art, Music, Physical Education, and Dance. The goal of AMPED nights at Traylor was two-fold: to provide an opportunity for students to perform and exhibit their work from specials classes and to create an immersive experience for family and friends to participate alongside one another in the arts.



Traylor Academy had not had a visual arts program in several years, and students, staff, and families advocated to bring back a robust art program that would benefit student learning. After hiring new art and music teachers for the 2022-23 school year, the specials team collaborated to create semi-annual programming called AMPED Nights. While the teachers taught and practiced with students in the classroom to prepare for the community event nights, the principal, family liaison, and secretary promoted and marketed the events via email, Class Dojo, Facebook, and fliers. The parent/ teacher group, Traylor Academy Boosters, also organized concessions for the events. Regarding the Dual Capacity Framework for Building Family-School Partnerships, families at Traylor served as advocates, then encouragers, and now supporters of AMPED Nights.



AMPED Night is a 90-minute event that is a celebration of art, movement, music, and community. Each specials teacher facilitates three 30-minute sessions. Grade levels are split to rotate through each of those sessions. In the classrooms leading up to AMPED Nights, students collaborated and used Habits of Discussion to work together to create, perform, and practice with one another in all three special classes. During the most recent AMPED Night at Traylor, the music teacher held a song and dance performance on stage as students sang and families played accompaniment on instruments. The PE/Dance teacher set up a circuit of family-game style activities including giant cup stacking, ping pong, and rock climbing while a DJ played upbeat music. The art teacher hosted a TASK Party where tables of supplies and recycled materials were available for use.

As each person or family entered the party, they chose a slip of paper which described a task to create and complete. Tasks ranged from making someone a necklace, to building a box fort with others, to creating decorations for the rooms. In between sessions, the Traylor Academy Boosters served a mix of free and inexpensive concessions in the cafeteria. Student outcomes were improved, as they gained experience showcasing and performing their arts skills. This connects to the Colorado Academic Music Standards of sharing musical learnings in a variety of environments. Anecdotally, the specials team also noted more confidence and risk taking from students.



The initial AMPED Night was evaluated by in-person conversations and feedback from students and family members after the inaugural event. Staff and leaders also circulated the event to get families input right away. After the first AMPED Night, the physical education teacher noted an opportunity for all the music, art, and PE/dance sessions to each include a parent involvement component. Therefore, during the second AMPED Night, families were invited to have a quick demo lesson in order to play instruments alongside their children singing. One challenge of holding the event in the spring was an unexpected winter storm which canceled after school activities and required the event to be rescheduled. Overall, the positive impact of the implementation of AMPED Nights can be summed up in the words of one of Traylor Academy's youngest students: "Can we have another party like that tomorrow?!"

Traylor staff connect their high attendance rate for AMPED Nights to National PTA Standard 2-- communicating effectively. Multiple channels of communication were utilized including family and student surveys, emails, digital principal newsletters, paper fliers, and the Class Dojo app. To remove language barriers, Traylor used the Dojo app which translated the event into six additional native languages. The schedule of performances was also shared in advance, so families knew where to start their evening. To prevent accessibility barriers, the event was held on the first floor of the school in the large common area. The family liaison shared to "embrace the chaos because it's so much fun!" She also recommended that because of the fun of the night, plan for a cushion of time to transition between sessions. People tend to linger when they are engaged and focused before moving to the next activity. Lastly, have parents and teachers volunteer in shifts, rather than a whole evening of service, so they can also participate in the art, music, and physical activities alongside the community.

