

not just another
bridge to cross

NINTH GRADE BRIDGE PROGRAM HELPS TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL



PASS IT AROUND. Link Leaders Jaden Jessop (11) and Derek Gonzalez (11) play a warmup game with their group of incoming ninth graders. The Ninth Grade Bridge program helped new students overcome the anxiety of high school by building familiarity with new people and the new environment. "We want the new freshmen to not feel overwhelmed when they get here, so we try to make sure they see familiar faces and realize that it's not as scary as it looks at first," Jessop said.



TALL AND STRONG. For a game to build communication and collaboration skills, Link Leader Miriam Sanchez (11) helps her group build a tower. "They had to build the tallest tower using only sheets of paper," Sanchez said. "So when we talked, one of the group members came up with the idea to fold them into triangles and stack them vertically."



DOWN TIME PICKUP. During the lunch break, learning specialist Jon Seim plays a pickup game of basketball outside with a group of incoming ninth grade students. The game included some lighthearted jokes and jeers among the players to stoke the spirit of competition. "It's fun to tease them a little bit about their game," Seim said. "It's not serious at all, and we all made fun of each other. It helps lighten the mood a bit."

photos provided by b. steward • reporting by s. poindexter

a fresh
welcome

BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT AIMS TO BRING FAMILIES IN TO STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS

"It's supposed to be part block party, part recruitment fair, part meet-and-greet," assistant principal Hannah Doran said. "Whatever you want to call it, it's supposed to feel different."

"There was a lot going on," Ryan Beltz (9) said. "But, that made it better. I stopped by the wrestling team's table and found out about practices."

That was the plan to draw families into the building for Back to School Night. So, in addition to the school providing food, each department was asked to provide some way of engaging families beyond a simple spiel or a flyer.

One department, however, leaned heavily into the interactive approach. The CTE department set up multiple stations in the lounge area of the cafeteria for families explore the different pathways available to students.

"We want our families to be a part of the school just as much as their students are," math teacher Amy Wilson said. "That takes a little more than just telling them about our classes and how to contact us if they have questions."

"They had torches, a photo booth, remote control robots, and cookies," Millie Wassam (11) said. "It was the coolest area for sure."

From the main lobby through into the cafeteria, tables with student representatives and teachers from each department — and several extracurricular activities, including fall and winter sports — lined the walls with information about the options students had as the year began.

The main lobby and the cafeteria were full, and the all the cookies disappeared. All signs that pointed to a successful event to kick off the new year.

"It's great to see everyone coming together and just having a good time," Principal Caroline Frazee said. "It really gives a strong sense of community, and we want our families to feel welcome and like they belong in our building."

photos by s. almagure • reporting by s.poindexter



time to **start** right
ORIENTATION SETS TONE FOR FIRST DAY

8:30 a.m.: welcome
"We were all in the small gym, and Beckwith led the assembly. They introduced the Link Leaders, and the Spirit team and the marching band performed. They wanted us to get into the school spirit for the first day back."
EDWIN FERGUSON (9)

9:05 a.m.: stations
"We went with our Bulldog teachers, and we went around the school for different things. They took us on a tour, talked to us in the auditorium about the code of conduct, had us play some icebreaker games and led us to the library to check out our Chromebooks."
FIDEL FLORES GAYTAN (9)

11:20: schedule
"Before lunch, we had to practice following our schedule. It helped me not feel so lost when we actually started classes. I knew where to go because of that. Afterward, we had lunch, then got to go home. It was only a half day, which was nice because we eased back in to it while also getting used to a new school."
AMELIA GANDORA (9)

photo provided by s. lopez • reporting by s. poindexter





THAT'S THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES. During Back to School Night, Culinary teacher Nikki Chima asks families to vote on the best cookie among those students baked in the first days of class. As they voted, Chima informed families about other opportunities through her program, including joining FCCLA to compete in a variety of contests. "I wanted to make sure there was a lot going on," Chima said. "That way more people would come to the table, and I could talk to them more. Face to face is the best way to connect with families."



THROW DOWN. After a false start on a bowl, Allison Thompson (12) laughs while sitting at the pottery wheel. The 3D art classes showcased throwing clay and soldering torches for jewelry at Back to School Night. "People were definitely drawn to what was going on over in our corner," Thompson said. "It was messy and looked dangerous, the perfect recipe to catch their attention for sure." **FLIGHT PATTERNS.** While waiting for families at the Science Department table, science teachers Robert Ruzicka and Mary Coleman chat as they make paper airplanes. The activity allowed the teachers to engage with families in an interactive way to excite students about science classes. "It's a fun way to keep everyone smiling while learning about the physics behind flying the perfect airplane," Ruzicka said.



TIME TO CATCH UP. At the journalism table, media adviser Sergio Yanes catches up with Mason Whittet's (9) family and explains some of the benefits of the journalism program at the school. Yanes built a connection with the family when he met Whittet's younger brother at a summer camp for students at Arvada K-8. "It means more when we build that connection with families," Yanes said. "I like knowing that we are working together to prepare our students."

build new bonds
Back to School Night • Ninth Grade Bridge • Orientation

008
009