



# Pinewood's Family Room Journey

Welcome to the Panther Den!

Kristi Reinsch, Mary Ellyn Dunn and Tierra Stennis

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# Our goals:



- ▶ To discuss the importance of a welcoming space for families in school
- ▶ To share Pinewood's path to developing a family space
  - ▶ Our missteps
  - ▶ How we planned and built a dedicated space
  - ▶ Creation of a feeling of mutual ownership
- ▶ To share how our Panther Den is utilized
- ▶ To discuss lessons learned on our journey and next steps

“Welcoming new students, their families, and staff is part of the broader goal of creating schools where staff, students and families interact positively with each other and identify with the school and its goals. An atmosphere can be created that fosters smooth transitions, positive informal encounters, and social interactions; facilitates social support; provides opportunities for ready access to information and for learning how to function effectively in the school culture; and encourages involvement in decision-making. Welcoming and social support are critical elements both in creating a positive sense of community at a school and in facilitating students’ school adjustment and performance.”

Reference: Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. (2007). Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families. Los Angeles, CA: Author.

# Pinewood's Journey

## ▶ Year One

- ▶ 5 Desks and 5 people in a small office
- ▶ Used for team meetings, testing, parent enrollment conferences, kids playing on the floor
- ▶ Used gym and library for Parent Child Interaction Groups
- ▶ Toys and activities in PTA closet and other areas
- ▶ Searching for meeting spaces
- ▶ Issues & Pushbacks



# Pinewood's Journey

## ► Year Two

- School enrollment changes presented an opportunity for classroom
- Chose a classroom by the front door, with doors
  - Easy for parents to find
  - Facilitate drop in & play, inviting and non-threatening
  - Crying noise away from classrooms



# Furnishing

- ▶ What we wanted
  - ▶ Multipurpose
    - ▶ Multiage
    - ▶ Furniture from baby to adult
    - ▶ Not a classroom, not a conference room, not a child care or Pre-K room
    - ▶ Family Centered & welcoming
      - ▶ Desks in back
      - ▶ Resources in the front
      - ▶ Shelving is mobile
      - ▶ Open floor plan
      - ▶ Materials are easily accessible
      - ▶ Coffee station is in the back
      - ▶ Closed storage
      - ▶ Couches





# Furnishing



# Furnishing





# Rollout & Introduction of the Panther Den

- ▶ Open House
  - ▶ Signs directing families in
  - ▶ Emails to staff
  - ▶ Information for families
  - ▶ Students & families vote on nominated names
  - ▶ Took pictures of families
- ▶ Panther Den
  - ▶ Morning announcements/Newsletters
  - ▶ Staff meeting-ribbon cutting
  - ▶ Letter home



# How We Use It

- ▶ Monthly Parent Child Interaction Group
- ▶ Weekly Drop In & Play Groups
- ▶ Quarterly Parent Café
- ▶ Teacher Training and Meetings
- ▶ Student/Parent Meeting
  - ▶ (IEP, MDT, & SAT)
- ▶ Home Visits
- ▶ Evaluations with UNL Evaluation Team
- ▶ Community Events





# How We Use It





# How We Use It



# How We Use It



# Why it works



- ▶ Planned Activities to bring people in
- ▶ Welcoming for youngest students
- ▶ Location at the front of the building
- ▶ Flexible furnishings
- ▶ Activities for wide range of students
- ▶ Ownership
  - ▶ Staff and family use
  - ▶ Home visiting/PreK/K-5/Meetings/Community Meetings/PTC drop in & play
  - ▶ All helped with the naming



# Lessons Learned

- ▶ Drop in and play vs. structured meeting
- ▶ Community choice of location
- ▶ Families still need to be invited

Questions?????

# Contact Information

- ▶ Kristi Reinsch (Principal)
  - ▶ [kristi.reinsch@ops.org](mailto:kristi.reinsch@ops.org)
- ▶ Tierra Stennis (Birth-3 Home Visitor)
  - ▶ [tierra.stennis@ops.org](mailto:tierra.stennis@ops.org)
- ▶ Mary Ellyn Dunn (Family Facilitator)
  - ▶ [maryellyn.dunn@ops.org](mailto:maryellyn.dunn@ops.org)
- ▶ Mary Beth Pistillo (Educational Facilitator)
  - ▶ [mbpistillo@nebraska.edu](mailto:mbpistillo@nebraska.edu)