

Culture and Character: Engaging Families in the Life of the School

Overview

Families are partners in the education of their children. Students and staff in Expeditionary Learning schools make families welcome, know them well, and engage them actively in the life of the school. Regular communication and multiple opportunities for participation encourage families to be strong partners in their children's learning.

BENCHMARK 6:

ENGAGING FAMILIES IN THE LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

A. Welcoming Families and Building Relationships

1. The school has in place practices and norms to welcome families and community members (e.g., established greetings, norms for guiding visitors, etc.).
2. Efforts are made to encourage all families' participation (e.g. scheduling events, assisting with transportation, providing translators, etc.).
3. School leaders collect data on family participation, and work with teachers and the community to increase family involvement.
4. School leaders and teachers learn about and respect the cultures, backgrounds, and values of their students' families.

B. Communication

1. The faculty begins the school year by establishing a pattern of positive, regular communication with families.
2. School leaders and teachers create an annual calendar of events that involve families in a variety of ways.
3. A range of publications and formats is used to assure that all families understand the school's policies, curriculum, approaches to instruction, and assessment system.
4. Teachers communicate regularly with families about their children's accomplishments.
5. School leaders and teachers develop strategies, such as enrollment interviews, surveys, or portfolio conferences, to learn about families and involve them in their children's learning.

C. Participation in the School

1. The school has a variety of ways for families to participate (e.g., governance, tutoring, classroom experts, portfolio panelists).
2. Interactive family education nights are held throughout the year (e.g., an open house to explain the year's expeditions, workshops to show how students are learning in the various disciplines, etc.).
3. Teachers and school leaders organize regular exhibitions and presentations of student work so that students share their project work and portfolios with family and community members.