

Culture and Character: Ensuring Equity and High Expectations

Overview

Expeditionary Learning teachers and school leaders hold high expectations for all students. Teachers work to understand the home cultures of their students. School leaders create and adapt structures to ensure that all students have access to a comprehensive and challenging curriculum. Teachers differentiate instruction so that all students produce high quality work and meet standards.



BENCHMARK 2:

ENSURING EQUITY AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS

A. Equity

1. Teachers learn about the home, cultural, and community backgrounds of their students.
2. Teachers appreciate how cultural differences influence curriculum and instruction and they build on student interests and backgrounds.
3. School communications welcome families and accommodate linguistic and cultural differences.
4. The school establishes forums that guarantee respectful communication and the opportunity for diverse perspectives to be heard.
5. Teachers and school leaders offer all students access to cultural and social institutions (e.g., libraries, museums, and universities).
6. Teaching materials are selected so that all students read high quality literature, assume multiple perspectives, and develop compassion and empathy.
7. Teachers use instructional practices that promote equity such as differentiating instruction and providing multiple pathways for achievement.
8. Exhibitions and performances present the work of all students.

B. High Expectations

1. All learning expeditions are rigorous and compelling, and require high-quality products.
2. Teachers ensure that all students acquire the background knowledge needed to succeed.
3. Teachers use instructional practices to ensure that all students are thinking and participating.
4. Teachers examine their own classroom equity practices using protocols (e.g., equitable response analysis).
5. Special education students are taught in regular classrooms to the greatest extent possible.
6. Teachers help all students develop and exemplify the school's character traits.

C. Passages and Graduation

1. Passages and graduations are based on students meeting competency standards and not only on seat time.
2. The school takes on the mission of providing students with the knowledge of colleges, universities, and careers, and it provides structured help to all students in accessing these opportunities.
3. In high schools, graduation content and skills standards are aligned with college entrance requirements.

D. Structures That Support Equity

1. Ability grouping (tracking) is replaced with flexible heterogeneous grouping informed by ongoing assessment.
2. The school has systems to support students who fall behind (e.g. summer school, tutorials, reading programs, etc.).