

Getting to Know the Students and Their Families

Key Question: How can you learn about the students and their families?

Directions: Getting to know the students and the local community is important, especially if you have moved from another state and are unfamiliar with this town. Review the ideas listed here and be prepared to discuss your ideas with your mentor. Feel free to add your own ideas to this list.

Ways to Introduce Yourself and Learn About Students and Families

1. Interviewing students—One way to find out about the school is to talk with students. They are usually hanging around the school in August waiting for it to start! Ask students what they like about this school, what they find challenging, and how teachers can help them learn. Create other interview questions to find out what you would like to learn about this school. The students tell it like it is! Don't be surprised by their responses!
2. Interviewing Parents—Where there are students there may be parents. Take this opportunity to introduce yourself and ask the parents about the school and the district. This simple informal research will give you lots of insight into the perspective of the parents and what they think about the school.
3. Observe the Community—If you don't live in this town, you need to learn about it. Some orientation programs provide a tour of the town and all the schools in the district. If that is not available, take a drive or a bus and see what this community looks like. Note where the schools are located within the town. Where is the downtown area? Is there a public library? What do the neighborhoods look like, and how does that impact the schools? Are there other resources you can use in the town? Museums? Recycle centers?
4. Review the School Website—This will help you find the answers for the Scavenger Hunt in ACT 4. You need to know how the website is used in this district and if it is important to you.
5. Write a letter to the students—Introduce yourself before the school year begins or during the first week of school. Share your background, your interests, and what you are looking forward to!
6. Write a letter to the parents and/or guardians—Share what you will be doing this year and how they can reach you if they have any questions. Be sure to include how excited you are to be teaching.

Are there other ways you can learn about students and families? Discuss them with your mentor!