

Teaching Our Children About Their Cultures

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My family celebrates Saint Patrick's Day because we are primarily Irish. We wear green, enjoy a corned beef and cabbage dinner, and decorate the house with shamrocks, Leprechauns, and pots of gold. We may listen to some Irish music and read Irish folklore. We also talk about what we value most about our family heritage.

Culturally Sensitive School Celebrations

During the winter months our students celebrate a variety of culturally sensitive holidays at school. These include Martin Luther King Junior Day, presidents' holidays, and the Cesar Chavez holiday. Several also celebrate Chinese New Year, the Tet Festival, or Saint Patrick's Day with their families. We write stories about favorite holidays and share details about how our families celebrate a specific holiday. Most students describe a special meal that was part of the celebration

with culturally relevant foods and traditions. Many families typically invite relatives to these special meals and celebrations.

At the end of this cultural unit, students will write their version of their family's bill of rights with a mission statement or the values of their family. When considering the first ten amendments to the United States Constitution, the Bill of Rights protects the basic rights of community members. These include the freedom of speech, press, assembly, and worship. Here is an example of a family's mission statement with some rights within a family:

Creating a Family Bill of Rights

Our family's mission statement is to protect, respect, and support each other in our healthy development of individual family members. Our family's bill of rights includes these 10 freedoms:

The right to be respected and supported by each family member

The right to have individual needs expressed and supported by family members

The right to express individual feelings and beliefs about a situation without threats of being ridiculed or punished for those beliefs

The right to attend school and participate in extra-curricular activities and team sports

The right to participate in age-appropriate social and physical fitness activities with friends

The right to participate in service learning,

community services, community leadership activities
The right to go to church and participate in age-appropriate church sponsored social activities
The right to explore and plan for a career path and college preparation
The right to work in a job with school-supportive hours while also attending high school
The right to help family members with project-based learning activities

A Family's Bill of Rights Impacts a Family's Values

Whenever, we complete this project with parents and their children, families are able to focus on what their values, mission, and bill of rights are for their family. These provide guidance with goals of what they would like their family to achieve. Many families frame or post their family's mission statement and bill of rights in a prominent place in their home. These become a motto for family harmony and a guide for family growth.

Much success as you celebrate your family heritage and identify your family's values with a mission statement to support the development of your family's bill of rights.

Mary Ann

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