

## Gallery Walks and Opportunities to See What Children are Learning

The Gallery Walk is a culminating activity at the end of a thematic unit of study to allow students to share what they have learned with parents and/or other students. The charts and student work that were generated throughout the thematic unit are still displayed on the walls of the classroom. Students are responsible for taking their parents through a series of stations or areas of the classroom, explaining the purpose and the learning achieved. This allows students to summarize their learning, to continue to use the vocabulary and knowledge that they have been developing. It is a low anxiety opportunity for parents to visit the classroom and talk with their child. This is a child directed activity, where the teacher is merely the facilitator to ensure that students have taken their parents through the stations.

### Implementation

The Gallery Walk occurs at the end of a unit of study while charts and student work are still displayed in the classroom.

- Step 1** Send a flyer home to invite parents to the Gallery Walk, which can take place the first 30 minutes of school or near the end of a school day (the last 30 minutes before pick-up time) or during the evening. A particularly effective way to encourage parent participation is to have students write a letter home to their parents asking them to attend.
- Step 2** Develop an agenda. Usually, the whole class performs some of the chants and songs as a group and are then dismissed to join their own parents/family members to take them around the classroom and to look through their work folders to share what has been learned during the unit. Consider what students will do if their family members can't make it (tour a sibling in the school, invite extra support staff at the school, match up two children with one family...)
- Step 3** Develop protocols or prompt sheets and offer practice for students. Teachers might provide a printed menu of areas of the room that students should share with parents to facilitate the activity. (e.g., Take Parents to the Researcher Center and explain what is there, take parents to the Draw and Label charts of the Octopus and the Krill and explain what they have in common and how they differ, etc.) To be highly effective, the expected level of student presentation should be modeled and practiced with students prior to parent attendance so that they are clear on the expectations.

### Modifications

- Students can select a particular station that is their responsibility. Parents circulate the room visiting the different stations.
- Students who don't have a parent attending can join together with students who do have a parent attending - they can be a "docent group".

- Some teachers, who have had less success with parent attendance, also invite another classroom to visit, so that all students have the opportunity to share their learning.
- Virtual Gallery Walks can be created using shared PowerPoints and video recordings for students to share about their performance tasks or other important learning. Virtual Gallery Walks can invite family members to engage in a series of activities with their child (listening to them sing a song, having them choose to share their favorite story from the unit, and can even have family members record Flipgrid or video of their learning after the Gallery Walk)