

Learning About Students

Overview of learning about students

Teachers learn about their particular students in order to design instruction that will support their learning and flourishing. They create opportunities within the classroom for students to show who they are and share parts of their identities if they wish. Teachers regularly check in with students outside of the classroom, including through one-on-one conversations and attendance at school events, and with families and community members. Teachers make use of their learning to tailor instruction for students.

Advancing justice through learning about students

Students enter classrooms with experiences, expectations, and ideas about themselves, the content they are learning, and the individuals who support their learning. The communities and neighborhoods in which they live shape and contribute to who they are inside and outside of school. Learning about students' neighborhoods, communities, families, and previous schools can foster partnerships that can help to disrupt injustices that have persisted for historically marginalized groups. Teachers must believe that children matter and are sense-makers, acknowledging and appreciating the funds of knowledge students bring to school and seeing students' strengths. By learning about students both as individuals with intersecting identities and as a collective, teachers can develop classroom culture, norms, and routines that value every student in the classroom. The work of learning about students extends beyond the classroom. Students' families and community members are also fundamental sources of insight and resources for teachers. Learning from a variety of individuals and in different contexts builds a connection between teachers, students, families, and community members. It also provides teachers with the opportunity to gather information to support the improvement of instruction.



Decomposition of learning about students

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Learning About Students

Areas of work for learning about students	Techniques for learning about students
Learning about students within the classroom	• Make space for students to share their individual and collective identities and experiences through the use of surveys, questions, and activities to learn about features of student identity including home language, how they identify themselves, preferences, and how they engage with their community. Notice what they share. • Create structures, norms, and routines for students to share information about themselves including regular check-in conversations, tools such as end-of-class checks and journals, and activities that provide students space to share features of their identities. • Create opportunities for students to show who they are (e.g., their interests, experiences, languages) through work on content. • Track on interactional patterns with and between students, including participation in different activity types.
Learning about students within the school	• Check in with your students and other students in the school through quick conversations in the hallway, cafeteria, and other school spaces. • When possible, attend school events (e.g., club meetings, performances, sporting events) in order to learn about students in other contexts through observations and conversations with students, families, and community members. • Keep abreast of school climate, culture, and policies, making opportunities to check in with students about the impact on their own experiences in the school. • Learn about the perspectives of other school staff who have worked with students to supplement one's own learnings about your students.



Areas of work for learning about students	Techniques for learning about students
Learning about students within the community	• Check in with families and community members about how students engage with their communities through informal conversations. • Build awareness of local resources, locations, events, and organizations with which students and families are likely to engage. • Stay abreast of local, state, and national events and policies that impact your students.
Leveraging one's learning	• Make use of learning about students and their communities when designing and adapting lessons and assessments. • Ensure that students' identities and communities are represented in the curriculum.

