

Knowledge of Students Form
Mode I
Non-Tenured Teachers (Required)
Standard II

Name: Kelley Reeder **School:** JBHS

Grade Level/Subject: English 9, 10 VT, and Journalism Yearbook **School Year:** 2009-2010

1.What techniques did you use to learn about your students' background knowledge and skills?

I tried to assess where all students are in the first week of school in several different areas First, writing is a major component of my class, so all students are given a PSSA-style prompt to complete in two class periods. This helped me to see where students are in terms of writing, and what skills might need to be worked on (thesis statement, five-paragraph structure, sentence fragments, etc.) that might not have been mastered in the previous grade level. This helped me to gauge where I would be going with the class the rest of the year.

Also, students were given a pre-test in my class to determine their grasp of major literary terms that had been covered by the middle school to note any gaps. This helped me to determine what literary terms needed to be covered more extensively and what terms I should expect students to know

Students completed various types of assessments throughout the year to determine the level of learning that was taking place in the classroom. Testing basic knowledge is a must, but is certainly not the only type of assessment used to see where students stand. Project-based learning, collaborative efforts, and presentations is another method that I employed to gauge student learning and see where more instruction might be necessary. Collins writing skills were also put into place and was continually used as an assessment tool for most units.

2.What techniques did you use to learn about your students' interests outside of school?

I try to get to know my students in various ways, particularly in the first few weeks of school, in order to build a rapport for the rest of the year. The first major assignment in my class is a poem about themselves, where students get to “fill in the blanks” about themselves to give me a clue as to who they are. These poems always reveal the “class clowns” and the more shy students, so I have a better feel for personalities after the class presentations. Students also fill out a survey on the first day with basic information, and I always take the time to read these and try to place a name with a face. I try to learn names by the first week, and I ask students to give me a unique characteristic or interest that they have to help trigger my memory. We play various icebreaker activities during the first week, as well, including a paper game where they state things about themselves which are true and switch papers. The person without a paper has to make a true statement and try to steal the paper. In general, day-to-day activities, I try to just talk to my students in free moments during class just to get to know them and how they are. By the end of September, I feel I have a good rapport with students and I have established that I care about them as individuals.

Throughout the year, I try to attend as many activities as possible to support my students in their extracurricular endeavors. I attend sporting events, concerts, productions, etc., to show my involvement in the school and in my students' lives so that they know that they are important to me in and outside of the school setting. This helps to develop a stronger rapport and allows me to engage with parents, as well as making me a notable part of the community.

3.What techniques did you use to learn about your students' family/home environment?

Along with the essay and various personal writings that my students do, I established a monthly

way of building rapport with parents and established an open means of communication with them. By sending out Student Spotlights on a monthly basis, students were chosen for their accomplishments in my classroom and acknowledged as being “in the spotlight.” Many parents took this as an opportunity to contact me personally. Also, Parent-Teacher Night helped me to establish a good rapport with parents that I was able to use throughout the rest of the year.

4. What modifications did you make to your original plan?

The main modification that I made was to make more personalized contact with the students on a normal basis. This meant that students needed to feel that I care about them as a person, not just as a body in my classroom. I had to take time out of my life outside of school and make time for my kids so that they would see they were important. This was a major part of modification to previous plans because I realized the need to establish a rapport with these kids. Establishing a rapport leads to a better relationship between students and teacher, and means for an “eager-to-please” attitude to develop on the part of the student. Although I do not like to personally get attached to the kids, we are in a profession where that just happens, and I was happy to embrace this idea and really get to know my kids on a level that allowed for students to want to greet me at their sporting events with a smile and a “Hello, Miss Reeder!”