

**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 do you use to learn about your students' background knowledge and skills?**

I try 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. The only directions I give is for the students to show me what they have learned in their previous class. I try not to give expectations because I want students thinking about expectations that they already know (ex. A prewriting should always be used). Hints are given, but mainly students are on their own. This helps 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 helps me to gauge where I am going with the class the rest of the year.

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

**2.What techniques do 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.

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

I try my best to make contact with parents on a positive note. I like to send e-mails throughout the year to get to know parents. Parents' Night is a great opportunity to get to know them and find out about what students are like at home. I also have students complete a writing assignment for me as their first assignment with major criteria where they choose three items that symbolize them. Most students choose something that symbolizes their family, and this provides me with the opportunity to get to know the students' home lives more. Also, through my conversations with students as I get to know them, as well as in the various opening activities described above, students reveal more about their home lives so that I have a clue of what is going on both inside and outside of the classroom.