

The Learner Profile: A Tool for Changing School Culture, Impacting Student Performance, and Promoting Family Connections

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The narratives we construct [about others] are nothing more than a collection of inferences rooted in our own limited experience... It is natural to construct them, but it is epistemically arrogant to treat them with a high level of confidence; and yet this is precisely what people do. We should, on the contrary, make every effort to cultivate a healthy skepticism in the face of those inferences and an ongoing openness to reform. The human person is always more than what we believe [her] to be on the basis of narrative construction, and [she] is forever more than "what" we can know about [her] scientifically (because essence and existence are really distinct). When we stand before a human being, we are before a mystery, and we must approach that mystery with great reverence.

Douglas McManaman

**What is the difference between knowing *of* someone,
and knowing *about* them?**



Learner Profiles at Joseph Lovett Elementary School
Chicago, IL

Think of a student in your classroom.

→ **Write 3 facts about their academic history.**

How have they performed in your subject area in the past? Which subjects do they find challenging? Which are their favorites? Do they enjoy reading and writing?

→ **Write 3 facts about their home culture.**

With which culture(s) does the student identify? What language(s) does the student speak? In what ways, if any, does their home culture conflict with mainstream American culture?

→ **Write 3 facts about the parents' hopes and dreams for this student.**

What future do parents envision for their child? What concerns do they have about her/his school day? What are the parents' academic priorities? Social/emotional priorities?

→ **Write 3 facts about the personal history.**

Where were they born? How many years have they spent in U.S. schools? Have they moved? How many times? How many siblings does the student have?

Learner Profiles serve several purposes.

Changing school culture

Impacting student performance

Promoting family connections

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Changing school culture

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A Learner Profile...

- Raises awareness of unique challenges faced by ELs
- Promotes cultural responsiveness in the classroom
- Changes focus from deficits to assets
- Elevates the particular importance of identity for ELs
- Aligns expectations for ELs (WIDA standards)

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Impacting student performance

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A Learner Profile...

- Makes lesson planning more student-focused
- Helps students feel "known", improves their motivation
- Creates closer student-teacher relationships
- Changes classroom dynamics
- Improves classroom management

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Promoting family connections

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A Learner Profile...

- Demonstrates respect and appreciation for student's family
- Helps teachers better understand family values
- Builds trust
- Counteracts stereotypes and assumptions

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What information is in
a Learner Profile?

—
What's In a Name?



—
What's In a Name?



What's In a Name?

- Names hold ancestral importance for many students
- A name can represent a family's stories
- Students should not have to adopt an Anglicized version of their name
- Our name is our identity!
- Having your name mispronounced in childhood can have lasting effects
- Mispronunciation of names creates shame, anxiety, and embarrassment
- Correct pronunciation: low investment, big returns
- Biggest obstacle is teacher effort



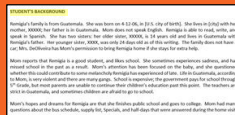
Student's Background

"That sense of 'I'm different' can manifest [in] a variety of esteem issues, so I am grateful my teachers recognized the enormous importance of community. I remember how warm each classroom felt, how loving the teachers were, and how much camaraderie I found amongst my classmates. **I don't, however, remember too many occasions where I was invited to explore my identity or my classmates' identities to unpack this notion of 'I'm different.'** It was not until college where I was able to really dissect my identity as a Lebanese-Palestinian, Muslim-American [Arabic speaker] growing up in Texas, and all the ways it shaped my relationship with learning. I wish I had been able to start exploring that earlier in elementary school."

Asif Yassine
Bilingual Learner, Teacher, Researcher
Harvard Graduate School of Education

Student's Background

- Knowing a student's background makes them feel valued
- Improves student motivation
- The literature is clear that effective instruction takes individual differences in learners into account
- Use Funds of Knowledge in lesson planning



Student's Academic History

- Supports differentiation
- Teachers have a "heads up" about problem areas

Standardized Test Scores

- MAP
- ACCESS
- DIBELS
- Other scores relevant to your setting

STUDENT'S ACADEMIC HISTORY

Ramigla has attended schools in the U.S. for 6 years; the attended Sumner of elementary school in 2012 and transferred to Central elementary school in year of grade 3rd. Ramigla currently attends elementary school in her city with excellent academic performance. She has excellent "Reading Habits" in all domains in her last ILE Progress Report. Ramigla understands and can grade level vocabulary.

STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES (2018 - 2021)

Year	ACCESS		MAP		DIBELS	
	Reading	Writing	Math	Science	Word Count	Fluency
2018	112	105	100	100	100	100
2019	115	108	105	105	105	105
2020	118	110	108	108	108	108
2021	120	112	110	110	110	110

Student's Assets

- Change deficit discourse to asset orientation
- Leverage assets instead of focusing on challenges

LEARNER ASSETS

- Ramigla is bilingual; she can speak, read and write in Spanish.
- Her mother expects her to do her best at school, and go to college.
- She has respect for teachers and enjoys school.
- Her family is familiar with the U.S. school system.
- She is pleasant and cooperative in the classroom, and wants to do well.

What Teachers Can Expect

- WIDA Can-Do Descriptors
- Content teachers know what they can expect from ELs in their classrooms

Short List of Suggested Strategies

- Strategies to support modifying instruction or materials
- Easy to implement immediately

WIDA Can-Do Descriptors

Language Proficiency	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
WIDA Can-Do Descriptors for ELs (L2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message. Identify the main idea and supporting details in a spoken message.
Short List of Suggested Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use visual aids to support understanding. Use visual aids to support understanding. Use visual aids to support understanding. Use visual aids to support understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use visual aids to support understanding. Use visual aids to support understanding. Use visual aids to support understanding. Use visual aids to support understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use visual aids to support understanding. Use visual aids to support understanding. Use visual aids to support understanding. Use visual aids to support understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use visual aids to support understanding. Use visual aids to support understanding. Use visual aids to support understanding. Use visual aids to support understanding.

Supporting the Student's Teaching Team

- Sheltering options for general education teachers
- WIDA's "[Go-To Strategies for ELLs](#)" (p. 25)
- Idaho Department of Education's "[ESL Strategies](#)"

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES
Two excellent resources for additional strategies are the Center for Applied Linguistics' ["Go-To Strategies for ELLs"](#) and the Idaho Department of Education's [ESL Strategies](#).

Cultural Responsiveness

- *Cultural Competence: A Primer for Educators*
- Culture Crossing Guide (<http://guide.culturecrossing.net/>)
- Plan lessons, design materials with students' cultures in mind
- Better prepared when aspects of culture appear in the classroom

WORKING WITH LATINO/A STUDENTS (borrowed from *Cultural Competence: A Primer for Educators* by Yan Mouk)
As a group, Latinos/as are very diverse. The cultural values described below will be true in varying degrees for individual students. Many factors play a role in creating diversity among individuals within Latino communities, including acculturation to life in the U.S. The following general features of Latino culture:

- Deep sense of family commitment, obligation, and responsibility
- "Family" includes both nuclear and extended (e.g., grandparents and biologically adopted children)
- Emphasis on the group, rather than the individual
- Emphasis on interdependence and cooperation
- Family roles and duties are highly structured and traditional
- Children are expected to be obedient and deferential
- An acceptance of life as it exists
- Time orientation to the present

Here's what others have to say.

"Learner profiles are indispensable when planning differentiated lessons and assessments, communicating with families, or collaborating with other members of the team."

6th Gr. ELA Teacher

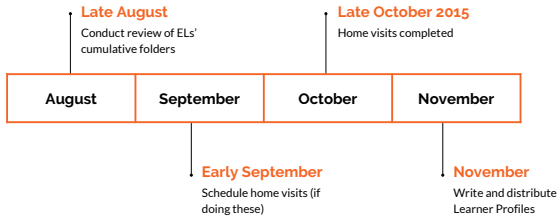
"Learner Profiles are very helpful for building connections with students. The more knowledge I have about the student as a person, the more comfortable they will feel talking with me."

Guidance Counselor

The Learner Profiles have been a tremendous help to me. It's beneficial to know about my students' past and present lives, at home and at school, so that I can plan appropriate accommodations.

8th Gr. Special Education Teacher

Suggested Timeline



Questions?

Thank you!

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