STUDENT PROFILES

On a yearly basis I work with roughly 160 students. I do not have any semester classes so at the beginning of each year I am able to establish an environment where I am able to get to know each of my students. As the year progresses I am then able to better assist them in their learning process. It is important for me to understand each of them as a person and a learner so I can plan my instruction to actually teach and challenge them individually, I have chosen two students to do my student profile on. The first is a strong student, and the second an emerging. Their names have been changed for this response.

“Annie” came into my class as a strong sophomore. As a freshman Annie easily completed the required curriculum with a strong “A” average. There was really no challenge provided for Annie in her freshman social studies class, so one of my challenges was to provide an enriching, but at the same time challenging, course for her. Annie participated in varsity soccer, JV basketball, and varsity track as a sophomore. Her time was filled with sports, which was her driving force. As an accomplished athlete Annie was able to use those skills to push her in class. She was determined, dedicated, and focused. Her personality traits pushed her to succeed. Whenever Annie had a difficult time learning the information she would push herself to study more so could comprehend the concepts. Annie never pushed herself too hard; she was always able to balance her “school” time with her personal time. She was a well-balanced student, and had great family support at home. This balance of academic success, athletic ability, and a sense of well-being grounded her. She had many friendships and was a spark in the classroom.

Annie was an excellent reader, could analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information at the highest level. The one area Annie struggled in (besides math) was writing. Annie’s writing was never horrendous, but at the same time it was only average. If I were to rank her skills, this would be her weakest skill. She often overcompensated her verbal responses and class participation to cover her writing weaknesses. Annie was an intuitive thinker. Thus, she like the theoretical discussions and was intellectually curious. She always wanted to know why, and always focused on meanings. If I ever got too close to the “touch feely stuff” she would always work to pull me back to the “thinking” side of the learning spectrum.

Annie was one of the strongest learners in my class this past year. She was a great student who always challenged herself. When I planned my units Annie was one of the students I would think about in trying to plan for the “advanced” students. On the other end of the spectrum I had two ESL students in the same sophomore class. My class was their first “mainstreamed” class outside of ESL. I also had three special education students on IEP’s. The emerging student, and one that I used as a guidepost on the end of the learning spectrum, is “Mark”.

Mark’s IEP stated that he needed extended time on assignments and projects. He also needed assistance on tests, and he was excluded from taking CIM tests. Before I met Mark I documented this information next to his name in my grade book. (I always write down individual students IEP information so that I remember to look at it when I plan, but I do not label the student because of the information in the IEP.) On the first day of school mark walked into class and took a seat in the back of the room. My seats are arranged in two semicircles with some open chairs under a worktable in the back of the room. He chose one of the chairs at the worktable to sit in. He sat next to the door, never took off his coat, and showed little interest in the other students in the class. He acknowledged other students and they acknowledged him. His choice of seat was the first hint that he would be one of the students I would be working with more through out the year.
Mark is a very tall sophomore student. His father is black and mother white. He always wears a do-rag and dresses in typical high school boy wear. His father, being an ex-Portland Trailblazer brings some prestige to Mark, but at the same time his father had little influence on his life. Actually, Mark does not know his father very well and does not respect his dad. For the most part, his mother has raised Mark by herself. To make ends meet she works two jobs and rarely sees Mark. Both jobs pay minimum wages, so money is scarce in the household. Mark’s mother is a positive influence but is having a very difficult time dealing with the pressures of being a single-parent to a high school male. Mark is easily influenced. His chosen group of friends is a negative influence on him and they often lead him down the wrong path. He does not regularly do drugs, but they are around him. If he has the money he will buy drugs. Mark’s most difficult times in school were when either his father was in town or when there were money issues in the home. He was vocal about with me once before he got to know me. I had Mark first period so he would often come in early and visit with me before school about what was happening at home.

Mark had a difficult time processing information. Note taking was very difficult for him. He did not read on his own, nor did he spend much extra time on studying to learn the information. All knowledge that mark had about 20th century US history came from direct instruction in class and the completion of classroom activities. Since Mark’s reading and writing skills were so low he had trained himself to learn though listening. He was a great listener. In class he was focused and participated to the best of his abilities. I would provide Mark with extra assistance in class to help him learn. I would give him (and other students) advance organizers, keyword lists, and shorter readings to assist with the information. Every day, if I took the time to visit mark, touch base, and/or make a personal connection he would perform at a higher level. I quickly learned to do this, and I got a lot more mileage out of a one minute conversation with him than doing nothing at all. In the beginning of the year mark performed poorly on assessments, but as the year progressed he readily improved. On the second semester final, Mark received a 74%. We both jumped for joy with excitement. I watched this one one student grow academically, but I think that the biggest growth happened to him as an individual. In addition to all the other issues, his self-confidence was always low, but by the end of the year he was starting to smile more, work with groups better, and take pride in his work. This is a great example of an emerging student.

For this assignment I chose not to get scores on the state assessments. I know that for Annie she passed the one state assessment that I facilitate, the expository research paper.

I often look at my students and use their individual needs to help me plan my classes. In addition to all the information used above, I also use my personal goals, the unit goals, and the State of Oregon’s Benchmarks to plan lessons. By looking at all levels of students I am able to better teach my subject, and in the end provide a better learning environment for all.