

Chapter 2 Resources: Knowing Students and Traction Planner

Bondie, R., & Zusho, A. (2018). *Differentiated instruction made practical: Engaging the extremes through classroom routines*. Routledge.

Knowing Students

Instructional Objective: Make teacher perceptions of students and learning visible

Teachers can only respond to the learning needs that they are able to perceive. Therefore, it is critical that teachers constantly reflect on their own perceptions of students and the learning that is happening in the classroom. These classroom routines can be completed during planning or any time teachers are reflecting their practice.

Jot Notes – Step by Step Directions

Step 1: Alone or with a grade level partner, think about a specific class to brainstorm a list of the things that you know about the students. You will focus on one category at a time for about two minutes considering first student needs, then strengths, and finally interests. You can record each category on one color of sticky notes, use different colors of pens or pencils using the table below. Begin by setting a timer for about two minutes and brainstorming as many student learning needs as you can. Consider a wide range of needs, listing everything that comes to mind. After a few minutes, stop and switch the color of sticky note or pen. Set the timer again and change your focus to student strengths. List as many strengths as you can by considering outside and inside school. Be sure to list all strengths, even those that may not always be desired at school, such as texting or talking too much. When the timer stops, change the color of sticky notes or pen one last time. Set the timer and brainstorm student interests. At any time, if a need or strength comes to mind then you can change to the designated color and add to your previous ideas.

Teacher Perception of Learner Needs, Strengths, and Interests

Learner Needs	Learner Strengths	Learner Interests

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Reflect: Review your lists, consider: What you know about your students? Did anything come up as an interest, strength, and need? Is one of your lists longer than the others? What do you need to find out about your students?

Step 2: Connect the interests, needs, and strengths to specific tasks that all students must master.

Learner Interests		
Individuals	Some (groups)	All (generally)
Task		
Learner Strengths		
All (generally)		Learner Needs
		All (generally)
Some (groups)		Some (groups)
		Individuals
Individuals		

Plan Next Steps:

1. Consider ways to use student strengths and interests to foster motivation by increasing meaningfulness of the task and feelings of competence.
2. Plan help resources to support students in areas of need.
3. Determine something that you would like to learn about students. Plan a next step of getting to know something specific about your students.
4. Complete the traction planner for an upcoming unit.

Credit: Jot Notes was inspired by the Kagan structure, Jot Thoughts. Kagan, S., Kagan, M., Kagan, L. (2015). *59 Kagan Structures*. Kagan Cooperative Learning.

Optional Activity: Explore Perceptions

Return to your initial brainstorm of student needs, strengths, and interests. Organize your brainstormed ideas into larger themes and meaningful categories that show relationships. Create a chart or drawing that helps you make sense of the ideas and organize your thinking. You might cluster the ideas into larger categories, mixing-up the strengths, needs, and interests and putting them together now in new ways that show connections and provide greater meaning. Add words and draw shapes or arrows to make sense of your brainstorm.

Optional Activity: Who is in the Classroom?

Objective: Describe and compare your students to yourself.

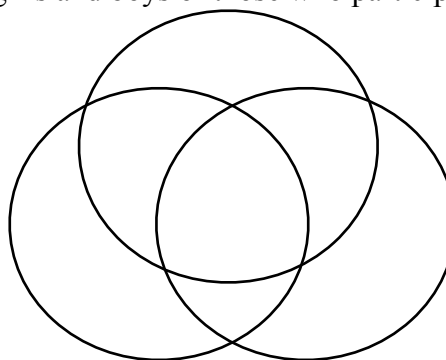
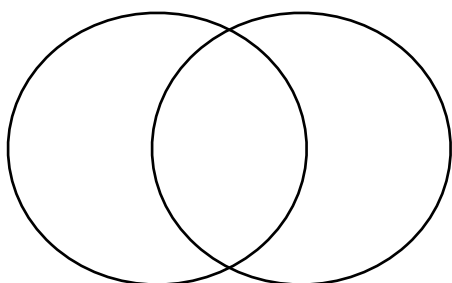
It is important to include ourselves when we are thinking about people in the classrooms. One way to reflect on and explore our perceptions is to consider our own identity, culture, strengths, interests, and learning needs and to compare ourselves to our students.

Step 1: Brainstorm as many characteristics, traits, experiences, and attributes as possible that might describe your students and yourself.

Step 2: Use a graphic organizer to make sense of your thinking. For example, organize your comparison using a **Venn Diagram** or a **Comparison Matrix**.

Venn Diagram

Two circles could be used to compare yourself to your students. Three circles might be used to compare you to two different groups of students (e.g. girls and boys or those who participate in after school clubs or do not participate).



Comparison Matrix

	Characteristics
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Items to be compared				
You	X	X		
Students		X		