GETTING TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

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It hardly seems fathomable that it’s time to start a new school year again. Yes, it is time to fashion a brand new year, with all the countless preparations we so painstakingly do get ready for our new students.

And after all the planning to begin the school year is in place, we take one task or getting to know our students. We plan first day activities, catchy ways to remember students name and so forth. But getting to know students need to go much farther beyond icebreaker games and first day activities. So often teachers, specially beginning teachers get so caught up in making sure that their classroom structure is in place and that their discipline system is effective. Often getting to know our students and establishing relationship with them takes a back seat to wanting classroom control. It’s the proverbial not seeing the forest for the trees. A fine balanced is needed. Yes, it is important to set your expectations at the beginning of the year, but at the same time we must build a relationship with every student. I believed once our students know that we have genuine interest in them, who they are, and what’s going on their lives, the structure and discipline will fall into place. Children will act out far less when they feel like their teacher is sincerely interested in them. They want to please and to fulfill our expectations.

A goal of any teacher should be getting to know the students in his or her classroom on an academic level as well as personal level. When the students know that their teacher is
getting to know them and is building relationship, the students will know that the teacher cares. Teachers can get to know their students academically by assigning essays and writing assignments that measure their knowledge and abilities. These assignments are often open ended questions that allow students freedom to show what they can do. Another way to get to know the students academically is to assign presentations in front of the class. Often students can express their academic progress verbally in ways that would be missed otherwise.

To get to know students on a more personal level it is a good idea to have some sort of introduction assignment at the beginning of a term or semester. This assignment can be anywhere forms a basic simple basic profile all the way to a creative art project or poem that reveals something personal about them. Some good things for students to share are information about their families, hobbies, and interest, and any other fun facts. Another good way to get to know a student personally is by listening to what they say during down time before and after class. Engage in their conversations whenever possible and act curious about their personal lives.

You should also begin to build your classroom community. There are some key concepts that can be applied to the community of the classroom. Your students will of course bring their own unique diversity to the classroom, but will have common interest, backgrounds, and their own personal history. The classroom can be compared to a mini-society with goals, expectations, and limits. Students will be living and interacting with one another in a shared environment for ten months out of a year. I think also that the word community speaks of a group uniting, caring for each other and working cooperatively while respecting the individual contributions of its members.
Getting to know your students and establishing those all important relationship is a vital key to meeting the goal of a positive and successful school year.

References:

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