KNOWING YOUR LEARNERS WELL

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It is hardly 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 to get ready for our new students.

And after all the planning to begin the school year is in place, we take on the task of getting to know our students. We plan first day activities, catchy ways to remember learner names and so forth. But getting to know our learners needs to go farther beyond icebreaker games and first day activities. So, often teachers, especially beginning teachers get so caught up in making sure that their classroom structure is in place and that their discipline system is effective. Getting to know our students and establishing relationships with them takes a back seat to wanting classroom control. It’s proverbial not seeing the forest for the trees. A fine balance 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 believe once our learners know that we have a genuine interest in them, who they are and what’s going on in their lives, the structure and discipline will fall into place. Children will act far less when they feel like their teacher is sincerely interested in them. They want to please and fulfil our expectations.

A goal of any teacher should be getting to know the learners in his or her classroom on an academic level as well as a personal level. When the students know that their teacher is getting to know them and is building relationships, 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 great way to get to know students is to
assign presentations in front of the class. Often students can express their progress verbally in ways that would be missed otherwise.

To get to know learner on a more personnel level it is good idea to have some sort of introduction or background of their families, hobbies and interest. Another is asking them when they feel sad, know what is happening around them. Give them a comfort in times when they are down.

References:

The Modern Teacher, Volume 59 February 2011
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