

# 4

## Developing Learning Profiles: Know Your Students

For the classroom teacher, who is responsible for meeting the learning needs of his or her students, effective instruction begins with an understanding of the needs of the learners, both collectively as a classroom unit and as individual students. If a child is demonstrating difficulties in school, it is important to identify the causes and take appropriate steps to alleviate them.

Once a teacher knows the dynamics of the classroom and the individual student profiles that support those dynamics, the teacher can select effective teaching and learning strategies and interventions to maximize student achievement. Classroom and individual student learning profiles are informative and insightful for this purpose.

Some district school boards may have already developed charts and diagrams that can be used to generate class and individual learning profiles. Some examples of charts used to record information are given in the appendices at the end of this chapter.

### Components of a class profile

All of the following information is necessary to establish the classroom profile and to determine each student's individual learning profile:

**Academic information – literacy and numeracy.** This includes taking a “snapshot” of all the students in the class and identifying their level of performance in literacy and numeracy. This information will be useful for planning instructional strategies and targeting goals.

**Educational history.** This includes the identification of the particular needs of students, consulting each student's educational record, reading assessment reports or previous Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and becoming familiar with academic, psychological, or educational assessments. This information will help the teacher provide the kinds of learning supports that have been used successfully with that student in previous years.

**Socio-affective information.** This includes the identification of affective, social, and personal development. Parents have an important role to play in this part of the profile. They know their child, and are essential partners in their child's success. This information will be helpful for devising successful groups for collaborative learning projects.

## Why Develop a Class Profile?

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The teacher establishes a class profile first and foremost to collectively identify the strengths, challenges, and needs of all students and to determine the stage that each student has reached in his or her learning.

Setting up a class profile is the first step in planning the teaching and the pedagogical intervention strategies for a given classroom. The teacher develops the class profile using an assessment of the students' academic achievement in literacy and numeracy. In addition, because the class profile has an impact on all areas, the teacher does not limit it to the students' academic level. It is also intended to identify:

- students' socio-affective development;
- their interests and talents;
- their current place in the learning process;
- their perceptions about their learning; and
- any details that parents have observed about their children.

The class profile provides the teacher with the necessary elements for modifying the curriculum for individual students and making appropriate accommodations; for differentiating his or her teaching; for planning significant projects; and for meeting the personal needs of each student. It is a basis for planning centred on the strengths, challenges, individual characteristics, and similarities that the students share in the classroom. Armed with all of this information, the teacher can then help the students to work together and cooperate with one another.

The teacher should develop the initial class profile at the beginning of the school year. She or he can draw from student profiles, which are also being drawn up in September by teachers, students, and parents. The teacher can then take all the information that has been provided and develop an educational plan.

## Critical Steps in the Development of a Class Profile

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1. **Gathering information on students.** The teacher develops his or her class profile using parent and student questionnaires. In addition, the teacher selects and analyses numeracy and literacy activities, and makes diagnostic assessments of student achievement. The teacher may add data kept in each student's school record to the profile.
2. **Organizing the student information.** The teacher summarizes strengths and areas of need related to literacy, numeracy, and social-behavioural issues, along with the programming implications (see Appendix 4-1).
3. **Selecting instructional strategies and resources based on the class profile.** The teacher identifies the strengths, needs, similar challenges, and interests of the students in the class. The teacher begins to identify those students who will benefit from similar modifications of the learning program, similar accommodations to the teaching, or similar interest-based topics.
4. **Program planning and the implementation of universal design and differentiated instruction.** The teacher considers the curriculum, the instructional strategies selected,

the patterns in the class, and individual student profiles, and plans in light of these factors. The principles of universal design ensure that planning is flexible, supportive, and adjustable, and increases access to the curriculum by all students. The teacher identifies how he or she will modify curriculum expectations for individual students, provide appropriate accommodations, and select effective instructional approaches.

**5. Program review and diagnosis of whole-class and individual student responses.**

The teacher takes into account the specific needs and strengths of all of the students, including those with special needs. Students learning should be monitored carefully so that the teacher is aware of each student's response to specific instructional strategies and to the overall learning environment. As the teacher collects evidence of skill and knowledge acquisition by students, the efficacy of instructional strategies can be reviewed and teacher planning revised accordingly.

- 6. Consultation with the in-school team and out-of-school supports.** Keeping in mind that strategies require adequate investment of time and persistence before a decision can be made about their effectiveness, the teacher may decide to seek further assistance regarding some students from the in-school team and out-of-school supports. The teacher works in collaboration with the in-school team to review the effectiveness of teaching strategies selected and/or to incorporate the recommendations made by out-of-school professionals.

**Figure 4. Class Profile Flowchart**

