

Student Profiles Protocol

Adapted from the San Francisco Coalition of Essential Small Schools and Network for College Success

Time: Approximately 45 minutes

Pre-work:

- Review the “Student profiles” below and edit as you see fit to ensure these profiles encompass your best guess about some of the most common student experiences in your building
 - TIP: If you have time, get feedback from students or ask for their help creating some of these profiles for your school
- Print copies of the profiles for your group

Discussion Protocol

Personal Reflections (10-15 minutes):

Read the student profiles and identify the student that most accurately describes who you were as a student in high school. If several fit (this will be true for many of you), choose the one that affected you the most, or the one that now seems most significant as you look back at your high school experience.

Form groups of participants who chose the same profile. For large groups (25+), have the profiles posted around the room and ask participants to navigate to the profile they chose. Once in groups, identify a facilitator, time keeper, recorder and reporter.

Profile Group Discussions (15 minutes):

Facilitator leads group in a discussion in which every person in the group should have an opportunity to talk to the following prompt (While the recorder is charting all the answers to questions 2 & 3, the reporter will synthesize only report out one answer) :

1. What were your school experiences in relation to this profile? What was it like to be this kind of student? These answers are not charted.
2. When you think about what was and was not effective for you as a student, what advice do you have for educators who do not associate with this profile to best educate students who might associate with this profile?
 - a. What was effective? What was not effective?
3. What is the most important thing others need to know to best support students in this group?

Take a moment for every participant to think of the name and face of a student who might associate with the reporting group's profile Groups share out on answers for questions 2 & 3, hearing from each Student Profile Group

Whole Group Debrief (15 minutes):

Reflect as a group:

- What patterns did we hear across the profiles?
- What did we hear from groups representing our least reached student –how do we feel about it?
- When we look around – who is in the room? Which students are not represented? How might we get insights for them?
- How should this inform and impact our practice?

Student Profiles

Student 1 I am life smart but not school smart, and I'll do almost anything to not look stupid in school. I am the class clown, (or the loud political protester, or the persistent talker) – on the edge of being a “behavior problem.” I don't mind being sent to the office instead of having to give an oral presentation – and I know just how to get sent there. Everyone at the office knows me well and greets me with affection, as they know I basically am “a good kid.” The things I am really good at seem to have little place or importance in school.

Student 2 Who am I anyway? It sometimes takes teachers a full semester to remember my name, and I often feel invisible. I am left on my own most the time. I act like that is not a problem, but I wouldn't mind some positive attention and support. Also, being invisible has not helped me when others tease me. I have started to not show up when I am afraid of conflict. Even though that is my choice, I am sad that I don't matter enough for my teachers to call home or talk to me about my absence.

Student 3 My teachers call me the model student. I believe they assume I am going to be successful so they don't check in, give extra support or challenge me. They put extra responsibility on me to help others without giving me feedback about my own work. Mostly though, I am stressed, and because I am “successful” I am getting none of the support I need to feel good or happy about my work.

Student 4 A lot of my friends say they hate going to school, but for the most part, school is something I look forward to. I get to choose to learn about things that are actually meaningful to me, and I see myself reflected in many of the things we learn about. I can tell my teachers are always looking for ways to make things more interesting for us in class, so they'll often ask us for suggestions on how to make things better. I have a lot of strong opinions, and I feel like I can share those opinions with my teachers. Sometimes, they'll use my suggestions, and at the very least, I know they'll hear me out and take my ideas seriously.

Student 5 My family has big plans for me. We left our homeland so I could succeed, but they don't know what it feels like to be a student with an accent whose name the teachers can't pronounce. My teachers act like I intentionally am making their lives difficult because I don't always understand what they are saying. They never show any interest in my background and give up communicating with my parents as soon as they discover the language difference. Or they ignore me, supporting and I feel like I am a problem.

Student 6 I'm not the top student, and school doesn't come as easy for me as it does for other kids. However, I feel like I'm always encouraged to do my best, and I feel like both the kids and the adults at school care about me for who I am, not just what I do, what grades I get, or how I score on the test. My teachers and principal make an effort to get to know me outside of class and connect with my family. When I go to school, I can just be me, and even though I don't share everything about myself with everyone, I know I have friends and adults I can go to when I'm going through something tough or need someone to talk to. In fact, they'll often check in with me first to ask how I'm doing.

Student 7 I am a finely tuned teacher-pleasing machine. I know exactly what I need to do to maximize my grade and I do it (no matter what)... and then some. I am organized, disciplined, and focused on my homework, getting good grades, and extra-curricular activities, which will look good on my transcript when I apply to college. My teachers know I will always volunteer for anything they ask – and I often do.

Student 8 I am a survivor – even though I might not feel it or know it yet. I have experienced violent trauma in my life. Even though some adults in my school know about it, most have no idea what it feels like. It is hard for me to focus and so much of what they say is important seems insignificant. I know my teachers want the best for me, but I just cannot help how I act sometimes because they “trigger” my reactions to safety, fear and trust. I wish someone just cared about me enough to listen – even when I wasn't talking.

Student 9 Who said academics and grades are the most important things about school? My classes are the places where I get to see my friends, and sometimes, frankly, the classes seem to interrupt what's really important – like hanging out , going to games, and participating in “extra-curricular” activities. These activities don't seem extra to me at all; they're central to what school is *really* all about. I complete the basics of major assignments – getting the lowest passing grade possible for the least amount of work is good enough for me. It's sometimes a game to see how close I can cut it.

Student 10 Other students ignore me or tease me and teachers pretend they don't notice the snickers and sidebars. I feel very different from everyone around me based on my race, religion, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation. I've got plenty of questions about who I am and how to find my place in the world, but I don't feel safe getting those answers at school. I can't necessarily have this conversation at home and I don't know anyone at school who understands.