

Pre-Assessing for General Readiness, Interests, and Learning Profiles

Pre-assessment is integral to high-quality differentiation. It is quite difficult for teachers to plan the best differentiation for students unless they know the students. Therefore, teachers in a differentiated classroom strive to find out as much as they can about student readiness, interest, and learning profiles at the beginning of the school year as well as before planning for specific unit content, processes, and products. In addition, judicious pre-assessment can save time in the long run by helping teachers fine-tune their teaching to better match the needs of students.

When and How to Pre-Assess

Much general information about student readiness, interest, and learning profile can be gathered early in the year and refined as students and teachers become more comfortable with one another. Possible sources of this information include school cumulative files, surveys, questionnaires, observations, and information from parents and previous teachers.

Remember, however, that general interests, learning preferences, and even readiness levels can change over time in the classroom. Use this kind of diagnostic information as a beginning—not an end—to learning about students. The table below illustrates the type of information teachers can look for as indicators of student interest, learning profiles, and readiness.

"You cannot have a relationship with, or make things relevant for, or expect rigor from a kid you don't know"

**—Dennis Littky
*The Big Picture***

What to Look for When Pre-Assessing for General Interest, Learning Profile, and Readiness

Interest	Learning Profile Preferences	Readiness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student interests, passions, and hobbies (both seen and unseen) • Family interests or pursuits • Organizational affiliations: after-school clubs, extra-curricular activities, and electives • What students watch on TV • The kind of music they listen to • The friends they hang out with • What they like to read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning style preferences • Intelligence preferences • Environmental preferences—for example, seating positions, amount of light, availability of food or drink, tolerance for background noise or music • Gender- or culture-related preferences such as a focus on competition or collaboration; preference for individual or group work • Preference for whole-to-part or part-to-whole learning • Personality components such as a tendency toward introversion or extraversion • Tendency toward intrinsic or extrinsic motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General communication, thinking, and reasoning skills • Attitude toward school and subject • Past school and life experiences, including successes and challenges • Physical and emotional health and developmental levels • A student’s status relative to KUDs for a unit (pre-assessment) or lesson (ongoing assessment) and relative to prerequisite KUDs.

In the next reading, we'll see some examples of pre-assessments for readiness, interest, and learning profile related to specific unit goals. In Module 3, we'll explore how the information collected during pre-assessment should inform instructional decisions.