

SELF UNDERSTANDING

understanding who you are, how you fit into the world, your potential for success, and how you can contribute

Tools to nurture identity and purpose in everyday learning

“The purpose of education is to learn to contribute—not in a specific or standardized way, but in personally relevant, purposeful ways unique to individuals’ interests and goals.”

**Joanne McEachen, Founder
The Learner First**





KEY PRINCIPLES OF CONTRIBUTIVE LEARNING™

Contributive Learning centers on the idea that education should not only impart knowledge but also foster well-being and a sense of purpose among learners.



HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Academic, emotional, social, and ethical growth, ensuring that students are well-rounded individuals capable of critical thinking and empathy.

REAL-WORLD RELEVANCE

Engaging with authentic problems and projects, students learn to apply their knowledge in meaningful ways, preparing them for the complexities of the modern world.

LEARNER AGENCY

When students have a voice in their education, they become more motivated and invested in their growth and success.

COMMUNITY & COLLABORATION

Learning is not a solitary endeavor. This collective effort not only enhances learning outcomes but also fosters a sense of belonging and shared responsibility.





Self Understanding

Understanding who your students are is crucial for recognizing their unique contributions. Equally important is your own journey of self-discovery—what makes you “you”? How can you cultivate your self-understanding alongside your students?

Establishing strong teaching and learning relationships significantly impacts student outcomes. Everyday learning environments and experiences are key opportunities to foster self-understanding collectively, which also helps build a sense of belonging within your classroom, school, and home. There are four dimensions of self-understanding

Identity

Who are you?

Place

Where do I fit?

Purpose

What’s your potential?

Capacity

How can you contribute?

These ideas are designed to help teachers, families, and students explore self-understanding—especially the dimension of **identity**. When individuals know who they are, they’re better equipped to make meaningful, impactful contributions to the world. Use these practical activities, along with your own, to support and celebrate each child as a unique and capable learner.



Self Understanding

Identity

Who Am I, Who Are You, and Who Are We?

Inquiry Question

Ideas for Teachers

Think about how you get to know your students at the beginning of a year when they are in the classroom. Make a list of three questions that you can ask all students- or have them ask each other.

Share aspects of your cultural background and traditions with your students.

Create a list of hobbies and activities you liked to do when you were younger as a way to let your students learn a little more about who you are.

Create a personal identity map that includes your interests, values, strengths, and experiences.

Share a personal story that highlights a significant moment in your life. Encourage students to ask questions and reflect on what they learned about you.

Reflect on your values and how they influence your teaching style and classroom management.

The logo for 'Self Understanding' features a stylized circular emblem with three overlapping segments in blue, green, and yellow. The text 'Self Understanding' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font to the right of the emblem.

Self Understanding

Identity

Who Am I, Who Are You, and Who Are We?

Inquiry Question

Ideas for Parents/Guardians/Families

Remember when you went off to elementary school? What did you want your teacher to know about you? If there's anything you could let your child's teacher know, what would you want to tell them? Write an email/note/postcard to your child's teacher letting them know one thing you love the most about your child.

Find photos or think back on stories of when you were at school, or when you were the same age as your children, and see if you and your children together can figure out what your favorite activity was to do when you were not at school. Why did you enjoy it so much, and how did you learn it? On a computer? In a group? Through a club?

Have a conversation with your children about what challenges you, what you enjoy/don't enjoy doing, or what you love or would change about your life.

Share about your cultural backgrounds and traditions with your children.

Share a personal story that highlights a significant moment in your life.

Engage children/family in a discussion about values and explore the similarities and differences of each unique person.



Self Understanding

Identity

Who Am I, Who Are You, and Who Are We?

Inquiry Question

Ideas for Students

What are you good at? See if you can find a way to share with your teacher and your classmates what you are good at. It might be a poem about yourself, a painting, a story, a vlog, a blog, a cartoon strip, a mathematical problem... your choice!

What challenges you? No one can do everything themselves, and being in a team means we can ask for help. A classroom is like a team—what do you think you would like help with this year from your classmates? Find a comfortable way to share this.

Create a list of hobbies and activities you liked to do when you were younger as a way to let your students learn a little more about who you are.

Think about what your favorite hobbies are and try to spend some time doing them this week. Start today by having a go at starting a new one or continuing one you've begun. What about them do you love?

Share with three classmates what you enjoy doing. Can you find three other students in your class who have the same hobby?

Create a personal identity map that includes your interests, values, strengths, and experiences.

The logo for 'Self Understanding' features three overlapping circles in blue, green, and yellow, with the word 'Self' in white and 'Understanding' in white text on a dark blue background.

Self Understanding

**What have we
learned about
ourselves and
one another?**

Inquiry Question

Bringing it all together

Getting to know who your students truly are is essential to supporting their learning. The more you understand each student as an individual, the better you can foster a sense of belonging. Alongside this understanding, it's just as important to show your students that you believe in their potential. When they feel seen, valued, and capable, they begin to believe in themselves—and that belief empowers them to contribute meaningfully to the world.

Teacher

Create a regular schedule for students to share their activities, interests, achievements, and goals. This can be done through daily or weekly discussions, or written updates. Encourage students to reflect on themselves and ensure they feel valued

Parent/Guardian/Family

Discuss with your children what is important to you about their school experience.

Talk about current issues that have affected their lives, communities, and world.

You might want to share your views and also share why others have different views.

Student

Reflect daily on what you learned about yourself, whether it's from activities, interactions, or experiences. Remember, school is also about self-discovery. For learning content, consider how it relates to your life, its importance, and the reasons for learning it.



Empowering Education, Elevating Student Success

Executive Coaching and Professional Learning

Meaningful learning that aligns with students' lives, identities, and the outcomes that genuinely matter in our rapidly changing, global communities.



Holistic
Development

Learner
Agency

Real World
Relevance

Community
&
Collaboration



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