



PERSONAL INVENTORY

The Purpose and the Process

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We know that every student has skills, talents, and interests. By collecting this information, we can create a class database or chart of useful information. Teachers and students will reference this list again and again and add new talents and interests as they emerge. What an ideal way to build respect for all, to get to know each other, and to discover unexpected commonalities and valuable differences.

How can this be helpful? A student who enjoys talking on the phone, for example, with a bit of skill development and practice, can become a group asset by being an administrative liaison for a service outing. Do you have an “expert shopper” in your midst? Harness that talent for getting items donated or finding the best price on a “must purchase” item. Uncovering a “green thumb” will come in handy, too. What about interests? Knowing that some students have an interest in protecting animals or interrupting bias may set your intentions for taking action in a particular direction.

Build skills and competencies by following an interview process when doing Personal Inventory. At all ages, children/teens can partner and ask each other questions to learn about each other, building question asking skills in pairs to reveal abilities and interests that will ultimately be helpful to the group.

A sequence for leading Personal Inventory and 2 Student Pages is provided; adapt as needed.

Grades K-1: Introduce key terms—interests, skills, and talents. Children first draw pictures of an interest. They share with a partner and then see what all have created. This can be repeated with skills and talents. At another time, they can share when they have helped someone and when they have been helped. These ideas can be reinforced through children’s books and everyday classroom experiences.

For Grades 2-5: Before the interview process, review active listening skills and give examples of questions for encouragement and to probe a response, for example if a child likes sports, we can ask, *What sport do you like?* Then have them interview each other using the Personal Inventory document (elementary version). They trade papers and take notes for each other. The first two questions are to find out the interests, skills and talents of the partner. The prompts about helping others and being helped can be done with a partner or through personal writing and discussion to introduce the idea of reciprocity.

For Grades 5-12: Use the Personal Inventory document (secondary) process and follow the sequence provided on the next page.

Take Personal Inventory home! Students can conduct this same interview to find out the interests, skills, and talents of parents or other significant adults. In addition to students gaining more practice with interviewing, this is a valuable listing of community resources.

For more about Personal Inventory, see *The Complete Guide to Service Learning*.

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PERSONAL INVENTORY

Opening

- Discuss “What is an inventory?” and why an inventory is taken in a store.
- Inform students they will create an inventory of their collective interests, skills, and talents and areas for growth through partner interviews.

Process

- Partner students in a way that way that creates random pairs. Once in pairs, they will trade papers (following pages), interview, and take notes for their partner, and then return the page.
- Ask, “What skills need to be in place to conduct an interview?” Review key skills:
 - Active listening: Use the One Minute Think Tank—student pairs have one minute to think of three indicators of good listening and three behaviors to avoid.
 - Taking notes: Ask for ideas on note taking, making sure legibility is mentioned.
 - Asking questions: Review types of questions including Questions for Getting Information and Question for Probing. Model each and ask for examples.
- Inform that the response “I don’t know” or “Nothing” is not acceptable. Everyone has interests, skills, and talents. Even if cultural norms influence us to be reticent about ourselves, sharing this information helps us collaborate and support each other in our learning endeavors or in any way we aim to collaborate. Have students consider what can be said if their partner responds, “I don’t know” or “Nothing.” Write their suggestions, such as, *We all have something we enjoy doing. What do you do on weekends? How do you spend time with friends?* on the board.
- Read aloud the prompts on the Personal Inventory organizer that speak to being helped and helping others. Introduce the notion of *reciprocity* and what it means: “mutual dependence, action, or influence; an exchange of helpfulness.” Note how conducting these interviews is an exercise in reciprocity, benefitting both participants.

Conducting the Personal Inventory

- Before beginning, decide on a uniform interview process. Do they want to complete an entire interview and then switch, or go back and forth question by question? Agreeing to a single format helps with shared time. This process can take 3-6 minutes per person.
- Set the interview process in motion.
- Construct a master inventory. First students call out the interests they heard, then repeat with skills and talents, and areas for growth. Record responses on chart paper. Refer to and add to the list as students discover and develop additional interests, talents, and skills.
- Invite students to reflect on what they learned about reciprocity by discussing when they have been helped and when helped by others.

Closing

- Discuss why knowing interests, skills, and talents can be helpful in any collaborative or service learning process.

Interests, skills, and talents—we all have them. What are yours?

Interests are what you think about and what you would like to know more about—for example, technology, the arts, social media, or an historical event. Are you interested in animals, movies, mysteries, or travel? Do you collect anything?

Skills and talents have to do with things that you like to do or that you do easily or well. Is there an activity you especially enjoy? Do you have a favorite subject in school? Do you sing, play the saxophone, or study ballet? Do you know more than one language? Can you cook? Do you like to take photographs or play soccer?

Areas for growth refer to abilities or qualities you aim to develop or improve.

Work with a partner and take turns interviewing each other to identify your interests, skills and talents, areas for growth, and to find out how you have helped and been helped by others.

Interests: I like to learn and think about . . . _____

Skills and talents: I can . . . _____

Areas for Growth: What I aim to develop or improve _____

Being helpful: Describe a time when you helped someone. _____

Receiving help: Describe a time when someone helped you. _____

Personal Inventory

Primary

Interests, skills, and talents—we all have them.
What are yours?

Interests are what you think about and what you would like to know more about. Your interest might be outer space, funny stories, or sports. Are you interested in animals, music, mysteries, or visiting faraway places? Do you collect anything?

Skills and talents have to do with what you like to do or what you do easily or well. Is there an activity you especially like? Do you have a favorite subject in school? Do you sing, play the saxophone, or dance? Do you know more than one language? Can you cook? Do you have a garden? Do you prefer to paint pictures or play soccer?

Work with a partner. Take turns interviewing each other to identify your interests, skills, and talents. Also, ask questions to find out how you have helped and been helped by others.

Interests: I like to learn and think about . . .

Skills and talents: I can . . .

Being helpful: Describe a time when you helped someone.

Receiving help: Describe a time when someone helped you.
