

UnboundEd

Planning with Funds of Knowledge



Effective instruction starts with the belief that students are inherently competent. Funds of knowledge are the ideas and skills we each develop through our lived experiences, essential for managing daily life and personal well-being (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Planning with funds of knowledge can help create an affirming learning environment where all students feel safe, supported, and immersed in their learning. Funds of knowledge can also make learning more meaningful when students are able to connect grade-level content to their lived experiences.



STEP 1: Get to Know Your Students Deeply

✳ **Guiding Question:** What opportunities do I have or strategies can I use to learn about my students’ lives and experiences outside of the classroom?

- Examples:**
- 1-1 interviews with students
 - Student surveys
 - Student roundtables or group interviews
 - Parent and family communication

(adapted from 4HS of belonging-centered math instruction 2023)

✳ **Guiding Question:** What strengths, lived experiences, and family expertise do my students bring into the classroom?

Surface Level	Deeper Information	Often-Hidden Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friends• Family and household members• Favorite activities• Students’ academic goals for the year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Favorite sports or hobbies• Household routines and caretaking roles in the home• Languages spoken in the home, family traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How students’ academic goals connect to their life goals• Family history and knowledge• Assumptions about and perspectives on the world

Planning Student-Centered Tasks

STEP 2: Find a Task Connection

✱ **Guiding Question:** How can I connect my students' strengths, lived experiences, and family expertise to the grade-level content I already teach?

Add a Task: Create an additional task that strengthens the goal of the lesson.

Opener/Background Knowledge: Connect new concepts to student experiences.

Projects and Performance Tasks: Allow students to draw from their communities and lived experiences.

Adapt a Task: Change one of the tasks in your lesson to include a familiar context.

Problems, Examples, and Scenarios: Adjust word problems, case studies, or real-world applications to reflect students' lives. Replace generic textbook content with relevant examples.

Examples:

- Add a discussion or reflection linking student experiences to new content.
- Change the context of a word problem.
- Investigate a phenomenon relevant to students' lives.
- Swap a text for one on a familiar topic while maintaining the same grade-level and skill focus.
- Introduce a guiding question to frame a unit.

STEP 3: Assess Impact and Adjust

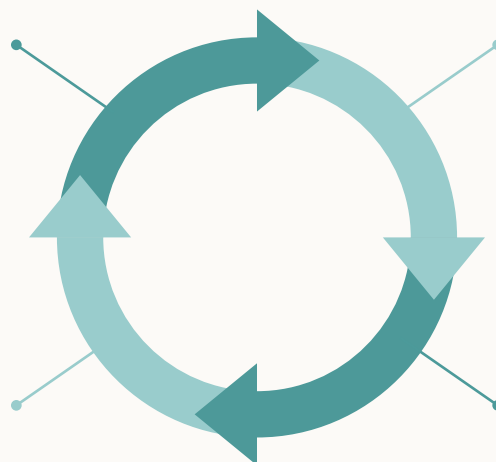
✱ **Guiding Question:** How did incorporating funds of knowledge impact student engagement, learning, and classroom community? What adjustments can I make to deepen these connections?

Share & Collaborate

Discuss your adaptations with colleagues to exchange ideas and build a collective resource bank for integrating funds of knowledge.

Adjust & Improve

Based on observations and feedback, tweak the task to better align with students' experiences and interests.



Observe and Reflect

Consider how students engaged with the adapted tasks. Did they participate more? Did their understanding deepen?

Gather Student Feedback

Ask students if the task felt meaningful. Use quick surveys, class discussions, or reflection prompts to hear their thoughts.