

# 360 on Our Students

## Purpose

In the spring of 2015, Denver elementary teacher Kyle Schwartz asked her students to complete this sentence in writing: “I wish my teacher knew...” The student responses were so unexpected, so moving, Schwartz shared some of them online, igniting a movement that went viral within hours. Teachers everywhere asked their students the same question, learning in late spring things that had troubled their kids all year:

- **“I wish my teacher knew how much I miss my Dad because he got deported to Mexico when I was 3 years old and I haven’t seen him in 6 years.”**
- **“I wish my teacher knew that I’ve been having trouble balancing my homework and sports lately.”**
- **“I wish my teacher knew I don’t have pencils at home.”**

The overwhelming response to this idea illustrates a significant gap in the data we collect on our students. Despite our efforts to carefully examine student performance and choose instructional interventions that best meet their needs, the truth is we need to be collecting, organizing, and analyzing more robust data on our students—facts about their home lives, their likes and dislikes, their learning preferences—the things that really matter.

A 360 doc is a place for teachers to store and access the “other” data we collect on our students, giving us a more complete, 360-degree view of each student. It’s a single chart that organizes it all and lets us see, at a glance, things we might otherwise forget. Many teachers already keep track of students’ birthdays. Think of this as a birthday chart, only bigger and better.

Because the 360 doc is a single document, teachers can access it much more easily than they could a whole folder of surveys. Having the information formatted this way also makes it immediately clear which students a teacher needs to get to know better. Try to gather information through natural conversations rather than a one-time survey.

Name	Passions	Family	Activities	Academics	Food/Drinks	Physical	Skills	Other
<i>Johnny (Example)</i>	<i>Minecraft Sharks Martial Arts</i>	<i>Lives with Mom, sister (Kayla 3 years old) and dog Myrtle</i>	<i>Tae Kwon Do Chess Sticker Collection</i>	<i>Loves Percy Jackson books Doesn’t like Math</i>	<i>Sour cream and onion chips Grapes Apple Juice</i>	<i>Left-handed Peanut allergy</i>	<i>Cooking Likes to help special needs students</i>	<i>Loves being outside Moved here 2 years ago</i>

## Overview of Each Section

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- **Passions:** What are the students really into? Keeping track of things like hobbies, collections, and other hard-to-categorize obsessions will help us connect with our students. Recording this information will boost our ability to help our students select books for independent reading, choose topics for writing or research projects, or even better understand math or history concepts by placing them in the context of things they like.
- **Family:** The home environment plays a major role in how well students perform academically. This category can include information about whether students live in one home or travel between the homes of two parents. We might ask about the number of people who live in a household. We can also include other family-related facts, like whether anyone at home is dealing with an illness, is currently incarcerated, has special needs, travels frequently, or has a noteworthy profession or skill set. (Mom is a circus performer? Probably worth noting.)
- **Activities:** This category will help us better understand what outside activities fill up students' schedules when they are not in school. Are they on sports teams? Do they have part-time jobs? Will they be busier on certain days of the week or at certain times of the year? Not only will this information give us a more complete picture of who our students are, it will build our awareness of the other demands placed on their time.
- **Academics:** Here's where we can put things a standardized test won't tell us about students' academic needs and preferences. If students struggle with handwriting, express a strong desire to work alone, have a strong interest in particular subject areas, or light up during certain types of activities, we can record this information; it will help us individualize instruction later.
- **Food & Drink:** No, we are not caterers. But why not keep a list of students' favorite candies or snacks? While we're at it, we can record food allergies on this chart as well—the information is probably in the school paperwork already; might as well add it here.
- **Physical:** Along with conditions that are already listed on our students' official paperwork, this category can include others that are not, but are still important, like needing to use the restroom frequently or the tendency to get cold easily.
- **Skills:** Our students bring with them talents and skills we may not even be aware of if we don't ask, so when we find these things out, include them in our chart. Have students been taking music lessons for years? We can add that. Do they know a lot about dairy farming? Origami? Photography? We can put it all in there. Not only will knowing about these skills further develop our knowledge of our students, they may also come in handy when we need help or information about an area where we lack expertise.
- **Other:** This seems like it could be a throw-away category, but making room for miscellaneous information is a good idea. Things like sensitivities to loud noises, religious practices, or random facts about student histories (e.g., "Lived in China") can also be recorded, even if they don't necessarily fit into any broad category. Although these categories offer vital information, they are just suggestions.

We can and should collect whatever information is most relevant to us, information that will help us connect to our students as whole people and build strong relationships with them.