**Learner Autobiography Lesson Plan**

**Purpose:** This tool provides an opportunity for students to explore their identities as learners and how past experiences have shaped their sense of themselves. It can be used in full as a lesson plan with middle or high school students (see pages 1-2), or for shorter written reflections or circle discussions with elementary students (see pages 3-4). In reading and hearing their responses, educators will better understand students’ beliefs about learning, their experiences with school, and how to support students in ways that are individualized and culturally responsive.

**Lesson Plan for One or More Class Periods**(recommended for grades 6-12)

**Step 1:** Provide this writing prompt as class begins (3-5 minutes):

*Describe a teacher who had a positive impact on you. What did they do or say that impacted you?*

**Step 2:** Ask students to “Turn and Talk” for 1 minute (i.e., turn to a partner to share their response and listen to their partner’s response).

**Step 3:** Explain to students that they will be working on an autobiography about their own story as a learner. Here is an example of how you might introduce this concept:

*We all come to school with different experiences. These experiences can really shape how we feel about our education. Today you will be writing an autobiography of your experience as a learner.* [*I’ve provided prompts for you to get your ideas flowing*](#4es3x9s0k1ee)*, but only use those that stand out to you.*

*After we finish writing, you will have the opportunity to share some of what you write with your peers. You will not need to share the entire autobiography with anyone else but me. This will help me get to know you better as a learner—it may even help you get to know yourself!*

**Step 4:** Share a list of prompts that you have selected from among the options on pages 3-4, then give students around 30 minutes to write their autobiographies. Write your own learner autobiography alongside them or share an excerpt from your own story as an example. This demonstrates value for the task and shows your students that you are a fellow learner investigating your own experiences. You may also choose to have students write over multiple days if you want them to complete a full process of drafting and revising.

**Step 5:** After 30 minutes, have students pair up and share one paragraph of their choosing, explaining additional context as needed. Once both partners have shared, have them each choose one “striking line” to share with the class. This may be a line that exemplifies their experiences or just one they really like!

**Step 6:** Have the class come together to share out a “striking line.” Share your “striking line.” too.

**Step 7:** Ask students to reflect on their writing experience as a whole class, with a partner or small group, or on their own, depending on your preference and the best format for your group. Use or adapt these reflection questions:

* *What was it like to write your learner autobiography? Did you come to any new realizations?*
* *What was different or similar about your autobiography and your partner’s or others you heard from in our class?*
* *Which questions on the handout really caught your attention? Why?*
* *How do you think your learner autobiography could help me or your other teachers support you?*
* *How do you think this reflecting/writing experience could be useful to you?*

**Learner Autobiography Prompts**

**Teacher instructions:** Select five or more of the prompts below to create a handout or display on the board as your students write their autobiographies.

Alternately, **for younger students**, choose one to two prompts that are a good match for their developmental level and use them in a class meeting, circle discussion, or brief journal reflection.

**Student instructions:** This assignment is a chance for you to reflect with curiosity about how your past school and life experiences have impacted you and the ways you learn best. Use this time to explore your identity as a learner, the people and moments that shaped the way you understand yourself, and how you approach learning.

Choose some or all these questions for inspiration as you begin. I’m looking forward to learning more about you!

* Think of up to five words that describe the kind of learner you are. Why did you pick those words?
* How do you feel about going to school most mornings? Why? In what ways did you feel differently or the same about school in the past?
* What are your favorite subjects in school now? What were your favorite subjects when you were younger? Explain what is different or the same.
* Think about a memorable project or unit from elementary school. What made it stand out to you?
* What kinds of topics, projects, or activities in school interest you now?
* Which clubs, hobbies, or afterschool activities do you enjoy now or in the past? Why?
* Describe a time you felt proud at school.
* Describe a time when you needed extra support at school. Did you get the support you needed? From whom?
* Describe a time when you feel you didn’t have a voice, or others didn’t listen to your ideas and opinions. What stands out to you from that experience?
* Write about a teacher, or an adult outside of school, who helped you be successful in school. What did they do that helped you? How did that person make you feel?
* Did you ever get a grade that was disappointing to you? How did you feel about it? How did your teachers or family respond? What did you do about it?
* What stories do you hear from your family members about their experiences in school? What are their hopes for you?
* Are there ways you have changed as a learner from when you were in elementary school? What made a difference?
* Which people or experiences most shaped the way you see yourself when you are at school?
* Many people find they feel and behave differently in school, at home, and with their friends. How do you see yourself differently in these settings? How would you explain the changes you see in yourself?
* What do you wish all your teachers knew about you, so that they can be an effective teacher for you?
* How has your sense of yourself as a learner changed over the years?