**Task 1: Knowledge of Students and the Learning Environment**

In this task, you will demonstrate the knowledge and skills that pertain to your understanding of your classroom in regard to your students, the school, and the community. You will identify implications of these factors on instruction and student learning.

**For this task, you must submit the following by Thursday, January 29 at 11:59 PM**

1. Four artifacts including the Contextual Factors Chart, the Instructional and Support Resources Chart, one completed Student Interest Inventory, and a method of Introduction. The templates for the Contextual Factors Chart and Instructional and Support Resources Chart are on the Spring 2015 Student Teaching Blackboard Site. ***Please clearly label your artifacts with your first and last name and description of the artifact!***
2. Written commentary of a maximum of 18,000 characters (approximately seven typed pages) that responds to all parts of the guiding prompts; references your artifacts to support your written evidence; describes, analyzes, and reflects on the evidence; and reflects in what ways the evidence you have collected impacts your understanding of the knowledge of students and the classroom learning environment. Your responses must address all parts of each of the guiding prompts. Type your responses in the textboxes. You may increase the size of the textboxes to meet your needs.

**Submit the template and all artifacts to Blackboard. Submit the TEMPLATE only to Foliotek under ‘MoPTA Task Templates’.**

**Step 1: Knowledge of Students**

This step will help you to familiarize yourself with your students and the characteristics and circumstances of the environment in which they learn.

**Artifact 1: Complete the Contextual Factors Chart.**

Complete Contextual Factors Chart by providing the requested information listed in each section of the first column. The Contextual Factors Chart is available on the Spring 2015 Student Teaching Blackboard site.

**Textbox 1nfluence**

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| ***Guiding Prompts***  **Textbox 1.1.1: Community, District, and School Contextual Factors that Influence Instruction**  From the Contextual Factors Chart, choose one factor that you consider will have the most impact on student learning from each of the following: *community, district,* and *school*.  a) Based on your chosen *community* factor, identify one possible teaching strategy **and** one learning activity that you could use in your classroom to further student learning.  Provide a rationale for choosing that strategy and activity and why it appropriately connects to your chosen factor.  I am student teaching first grade in a rural community. I would use the books “Where Do I Live?” and “Me on the Map” as a teaching strategy that the world is bigger than the students’ immediate community. I would use an activity with the book “Me on the Map” to create a graphic organizer. Students begin with themselves as a black dot, and continue making circles with different colored paper, each a little larger than the last and labeled as school, city, state, country, and planet. This teaches them that no matter how big the circle (or world) gets that they are still contributing members of society.  b) Based on your chosen *district* factor, identify one possible teaching strategy **and** one learning activity that you could use in your classroom to further student learning.  Provide a rationale for choosing that strategy and activity and why it appropriately connects to your chosen factor.  While there aren’t a high percentage of different ethnic groups, they are present in the school. In order to include these groups, inviting guest speakers to share things about cultures that are different from things we do in our culture would be a strategy to develop student listening and note taking skills. Having students create a KWL chart with what they already **K**now and what they **W**ant to know before the speaker begins gives them an opportunity to draw on prior knowledge and develop listening skills to answer the question in their **W** section of the chart. Students need to listen for new information and take notes in the **L** section, for what they **L**earned during the presentation.    c) Based on your chosen *school* factor, identify one possible teaching strategy **and** one learning activity that you could use in your classroom to further student learning.  Provide a rationale for choosing that strategy and activity and why it appropriately connects to your chosen factor.  While MAP testing is not done on the K-1 level, their reading scores are assessed by AimsWeb and DRA. Using the data from all first grades classes, most students are below reading level. Fluency seems to be the biggest hindrance. Using read alouds as a strategy is important for modeling fluency. Students can hear how different genres are read differently along with the smoothness of reading a text. To follow up with this, Reading A-Z offers fluency passages that students can use to practice their fluency. It could be marked as a running record with different colored pens so the students can specifically see their progress on the same passage over a 4-5 day period. I think when students can visibly see their improvement, it gives them confidence as they develop fluency. |
| ***Guiding Prompts***  **Textbox 1.1.2: Classroom Demographics and Knowledge of Students**  From the Contextual Factors Chart, choose one factor that you consider will have the most impact on student learning from each of the following: *classroom demographics* and *knowledge of students*.  a) Based on your chosen *classroom demographics* factor, identify one possible teaching strategy **and** one learning activity that you could use in your classroom to further student learning.  Provide a rationale for choosing that strategy and activity and why it appropriately connects to your chosen factor.  In my classroom, I have one child with Asian ethnicity, so there isn’t a lot of cultural diversity, however, diversity doesn’t always have to be about cultural differences, it can simply be differences in personality or religion. I really like the book *I Am America* by Charles R. Smith, Jr. It teaches acceptance and tolerance of our differences. As a teaching strategy, I would introduce and read this book to the class and talk about how different people like different things. For the activity, we would create a classroom mural using pictures of each student with an “I AM \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” caption under each picture where the students fill in the “label” they want to use to describe themselves.  b) Based on your chosen *knowledge of students’* factor, identify one possible teaching strategy **and** one learning activity that you could use in your classroom to further student learning.  Provide a rationale for choosing that strategy and activity and why it appropriately connects to your chosen factor.  I have a very diverse group of learners. It is important to keep the attention of high achieving students while also making sure you are meeting the needs of lower students. Reading is where I see the biggest gap. I have tried to incorporate more read alouds with my lessons using books to help explain a concept or introduce a topic. The books I chose are on a higher reading level than most of the students, but they enjoy being read to, while it challenges the higher reading level students as I pose questions during the reading. By asking higher order questions during reading, it gives opportunities for below average readers to hear the discussions and introduces them to vocabulary they don’t hear every day. |

**Step 2: Resources and Procedures**

**Artifact 2: Complete the Instructional and Support Resources Chart.**

In this activity, you will identify available resources and explain how they would be used.

**Textbox 1.2.1: Available Resources to Enhance Student Learning**

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| ***Guiding Prompts***  **Textbox 1.2.1: Available Resources to Enhance Student Learning**  After completing the Instructional and Support Resources Chart, answer the following.  a) Select two resources and describe how you would use each of these in your classroom to support your students’ learning.  We use the Smart Board with spelling and math. We use the refrigerator magnet app that is included in the Smart Board menu for spelling where students can come to the smart board and use the letters to spell different words that are from our word study list. Even if they spell the words wrong, it is a learning opportunity for everyone. There is no laughing or making fun of each other and is a mutually respectful activity.  We also use our math curriculum which has an online resource with videos, songs, and activities to enhance math concepts. When beginning a new concept, the students sit in front of the Smart Board to watch a kid friendly video to introduce the topic. They hear us talking all day and sometimes, they need a break from hearing us, so I believe the videos are a great way to differentiate instruction.  b) Now select any one resource. Also, from your Contextual Factors Chart, select a particular characteristic that you listed under Knowledge of Students. Describe how this resource could help support the chosen characteristic to enhance student learning.  RTI is a resource that is used district wide. It is used for students who have learning needs that aren’t being met in the classroom on a regular basis. The great thing I like about RTI is that it doesn’t have to be the same students all the time. Right now, we have a group we work with who struggle with fluency, so we are working on those word chunks to help them decode words more quickly as they read. A couple of weeks ago, we worked with students who were having trouble with regrouping numbers. It is a time during the day that we can instruct students who need the extra help, but don’t qualify for Title 1 or other special services. |

**Artifact 3: Student Interest Inventory.**

Administer a Student Interest Inventory appropriate to your classroom assignment to gather information relevant to student interests and learning.

**Textbox 1.2.2: Student Interest**

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| ***Guiding Prompts***  **Textbox 1.2.2 Student Interest Inventory**  a) Based on the compilation of information from this inventory, analyze one example of how this information would influence an instructional decision you make in your classroom.  As I was evaluating my Student Interest Inventories, I noticed many of the students said they liked music and drawing. We have been taking about sequence of events in the stories we have been reading. We have been asking them to write out the details in the order in which they occurred in the story and it has been such a struggle. They know what they want to say, but for some reason, getting it down on the paper seems to be an issue. I found a graphic organizer that looks like film strips with 6 blank frames. Based on the inventory they filled out, I asked them to draw the details from the story, in order. They LOVED this activity and even began to write captions about what was happening in each frame! Expressing their thoughts by drawing, first, helped them organize their thoughts and made it easier for them to write the details in the correct order.  b) Using one completed student interest inventory, analyze how one item from this inventory can be used to promote his/her engagement and learning.  I chose a student who is very bright and easily bored, which leads to him acting out inappropriately in class. He is actually one of the only ones that I felt completed the Interest Inventory with how he truly feels. He does not like science or social studies, which seems to be the times he struggles with following directions. As I reflect on how I am teaching these subjects, even though it is a short period of time, most of it is them sitting, and me “lecturing.” He is very engaged anytime we use the Smart Board, so I decided to use that for my lesson instead of reading from the Scholastic News page. Instead, we watched a schooltube.com with music, pictures, and kids narrating. He soaked in the information and was the first one with his hand up to answer questions I asked following the video. |

**Artifact 4: Introduction to Your Students and their Families**

Based on the demographics of your classroom and knowledge of families and community, construct a communication method that introduces you to your students and their families. The form of communication could be, but is not limited to, the use of a Web site, e-mail, school function/activity, or a letter.

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| **Textbox 1.2.3: Communicating with Students and Families**  a) Describe one example of how your communication method addresses your awareness of the demographic differences in the classroom.  I used a letter home to introduce myself to the students and their parents. I wasn’t sure how many parents had access to email or a computer, so I chose to send the letter home in their “Pirate Notebooks” which has a place for notes home. Parents have been using this procedure since the beginning of the year, so I felt it would be the best way for communication.  b) Describe how your method of communication fosters interactive communication among you, your students, and their families.  While I may choose a different way to communicate in my own classroom, my cooperating teacher had already established the use of the students’ “Pirate Notebooks” that are used for transporting homework, school and classroom communications, and notes from home. Since I came into the classroom in the middle of the year, I felt it was easiest to follow procedures already set up rather than change it. Parents have sent notes to us through this notebook, and some have also communicated by email. Because I do not have access to school email, my cooperating teacher takes care of responding via email, but does keep me informed of their content when it is related to the students. |

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| **Textbox 1.2.4: Rules and Procedures**  Access and review the rules and procedures for the classroom to which you are assigned.  a) Describe one example of a behavior management rule or procedure. Analyze the implications of this rule/procedure for facilitating instruction, enhancing student learning, **or** impacting the learning environment.  For first graders, raising their hand to speak is one of the rules/procedures that is the most important to me. Because I want to make learning fun and engaging, it is important for me to involve the students in the lessons. Raising their hand and waiting to be called on keeps them from blurting out the answer or story they want to tell. It is still a hard concept for some of them to learn, but the procedure is repeated when necessary. Students learn to be respectful of others and it helps develop speaking and listening skills necessary for future education.  b) Describe one example of a technology rule or procedure. Analyze the implications of this rule/procedure for facilitating instruction, enhancing student learning, **or** impacting the learning environment.  We use the Smart Board with spelling and math. We use the refrigerator magnet app that is included in the Smart Board menu for spelling where students can come to the smart board and use the letters to spell different words that are from our word study list. Even if they spell the words wrong, it is a learning opportunity for everyone. There is no laughing or making fun of each other and is a mutually respectful activity. Our math curriculum has an online resource with videos, songs, and activities to enhance math concepts. When beginning a new concept, the students sit in front of the Smart Board to watch a kid friendly video to introduce the topic. They hear us talking all day and sometimes, they need a break from hearing us, so I believe the videos are a great way to differentiate instruction.  c) Describe one example of a classroom rule or procedure. Analyze the implications of this rule/procedure for facilitating instruction, enhancing student learning, **or** impacting the learning environment.  The biggest procedure is moving through the literacy stations while other students are in their reading groups. Our stations include writing, read to self, read to someone, word work, and FYI. Read to someone and FYI stations require students to read and work together in a whisper quiet voice. Each station is approximately 20 minutes. When time is up, one of the lights is turned off and on 3 times. This is their signal to clean up their station and move quickly and quietly to the next one and get settled with little noise. We had a situation a few days ago, where students were not following procedures and one of them got hurt. After making sure the student was ok, we had them return to the station they came from, repeat the rules for the stations, and practice transitioning. It took 3 times of practicing for an acceptable transition, but they have done fantastic in their movement since then. |