

## PPAT<sup>®</sup> Assessment

### Library of Examples – Mathematics

#### Task 1, Step 2, 1.2.2: The Focus Students

Below are two examples of written responses to Textbox 1.2.2 as excerpted from the portfolios of two different candidates. The candidate responses were not corrected or changed from what was submitted. One response was scored at the Met/Exceeded Standards Level and the other response was scored at the Does Not Meet/Partially Met Standards Level. This information is being provided for illustrative purposes only. These excerpts are not templates for you to use to guarantee a successful score. Rather, they are examples that you can use for comparison purposes to see the kinds of evidence that you may need to add to your own work.

**The work you submit as part of your response to each task must be yours and yours alone.** Your written commentaries, the student work and other artifacts you submit, and your video recordings must all feature teaching that you did and work that you supervised.

#### Guiding Prompt for Task 1, Textbox 1.2.2

- a. Describe each identified Focus Student’s cultural and linguistic assets, lived experiences, and academic strengths and learning needs. Explain how each of these two students contributes to the learning environment of your classroom.
- b. Based on your knowledge of Focus Student #1, identify and describe one possible instructional strategy **and** one learning activity that you and this student could create together to use in your classroom to support this student. Explain how the identified strategy and activity reflect your understanding and appreciation of this student’s cultural and linguistic assets lived experiences, academic strengths, and learning needs.
- c. Based on your knowledge of Focus Student #2, identify and describe one possible instructional strategy **and** one learning activity that you and this student could create together to use in your classroom to support this student. Explain how the identified strategy and activity reflect your understanding and appreciation of this student’s cultural and linguistic assets lived experiences, academic strengths, and learning needs.

#### Example 1: Met/Exceeded Standards Level

- a. Focus Student #1 is a Hispanic female who came to the States from Mexico about two years ago. Her primary language is Spanish, and she attends class with our full-time Spanish translator. Her English has improved greatly since she arrived here—she takes her tests in English without translation help, and she will answer questions in English when addressed in class. As far as home life goes, Focus Student #1 lives with her uncle, her older sister, and her brother-in-law. Her brother and cousin, fellow students at school,

also live with her. Her school file also reports that she is working with the school district to receive a court-appointed guardian, a situation that applies to her alone, not to her brother or cousin. I don't know the circumstances behind this request, but I can imagine that it comes with a great deal of at-home stress that likely bleeds over into her school life. Despite this, Focus Student #1 is a hardworking student. Her lived experiences have left her resilient and up for a challenge. She is not daunted by learning a difficult subject in a second language—she recently outperformed all of her classmates on a test that she took with no translation help whatsoever. She still has the translator come to class with her, and this is definitely helpful when we introduce new material that includes words that Focus Student #1 only understands in Spanish. I definitely have to make sure that we don't go so fast that the translator can't help out this student if necessary. I have noticed that Focus Student #1 lacks confidence in the sense that she will rarely, if ever, volunteer her thinking or an answer to a question, although she will always provide an answer if asked a question directly. Knowing that she always has a thought ready means that if the class is struggling, I can count on Focus Student #1 to provide new insight to the conversation that will hopefully point the discussion in a new, positive direction.

Focus Student #2 is a White female who is enrolled in Secondary Math II Lite as a junior (a year behind the expected track). She speaks English at home, where she lives with her mother, step-father, and her older sister. I know that her older sister has had a rough time lately, and has faced a lot of identity confusion—she has changed her gender identity and her sexual identity several times across the past year. This has led to some anger issues in the older sister, and she and Focus Student #2 don't get along very well. This has bled over into some attendance issues for Focus Student #2. Despite this, she is a great asset in the classroom dynamic. She is always willing to throw out her ideas or her answers, even when these aren't fully correct. She is in a class that is very quiet and generally lacks participation, so her input is always very welcome. Some specific learning needs that I've noticed are some general gaps in basic mathematical understanding. I haven't totally pegged where these gaps are, or how deeply they run, but I do notice that Focus Student #2 struggles with basic arithmetic on a daily basis. This is something that I'm looking out for moving forward so that I can address these learning needs.

- b. One thing about Focus Student #1 that really jumps out at me is a lack of confidence. I think her mathematical abilities are far greater than she gives herself credit for, and I think that the same is true of her ability to speak English. Based on this observation, I'd choose to sit down with this student and come up with a plan to help her boost her confidence. What helps her feel successful? What is her favorite thing about math class? What does she wish we did more of? I think it's okay if she doesn't always want to be raising her hand and volunteering ideas and answers, but that is an easy way for me as the teacher to gauge my student's understanding. Brainstorming with this student other ways that she can show me that she understands is a helpful practice. One efficient self-assessment tool is a "thumb scale:" a thumbs up means, "I got it, I'm ready to move on;" a thumbs down means, "I am completely lost, please help me;" a thumb pointed directly sideways means, "I'm getting there, but another example would be helpful." Focus Student #1 (and her classmates) can point their thumb in the direction that they feel best describes their current understanding, including anywhere in between the three "landmark" levels. This is a self-assessment tool that is low-risk to students like Focus Student #1 who don't feel comfortable speaking or sharing loudly in class, but still allows for them to make their understanding known.

Based on a conversation with Focus Student #1, we can together create a learning activity that highlights some of the historical mathematical contributions of Mexico (past and present). We generally learn "European" math in high school, but looking at mathematical developments that occurred among different peoples (e.g. the Aztecs and, further south, the Mayans) is both useful and enlightening. Students should know that math didn't just come from Germany and Greece; the Aztecs created a written number system that can be related to algebraic thinking. They understood fractions and proportions. Looking at examples of how these people thought about such abstract concepts could provide additional insight for students (especially in the Lite class, which Focus Student #1 attends) who struggle with such topics, even on a basic level.. In addition, this directly relates to Focus Student #1's Mexican heritage, and would highlight for her some contributions of who could potentially be some of her ancestors. She would enjoy learning about diverse methods to think about/conceptualize difficult concepts and appreciates knowing that her classmates will be able to learn through the eyes of a different culture, as well.

- c. I know that Focus Student #2 struggles with a lot of basic calculations that we consider a foundation by Secondary Math II. For example, she struggles with adding and subtracting single-digit numbers, especially if one or both numbers are negative. She struggles to see and apply the difference between a square root and a long division symbol. Sitting down with Focus Student #2, I'd like to get a grasp of her self-assessment of some of these skills. Using the strategy of a personalized self-assessment, we can, together, construct a list of "I can..." statements with a 1-5 scale next to each statement (Strongly Disagree up to Strongly Agree). Based on her responses, we think that creating a think-aloud learning activity that reviews these key foundational concepts would be very beneficial for Focus Student #2. This would require some individual time with Focus Student 2. She would be presented with a problem solve (for example, a long division problem) and asked to explain her thought process as she solves the problem with assistance. This will allow me to catch errors in her thought process in real time. For example, when dividing 1587 by 9, I might first ask her to estimate the answer to help her use other skills in determining an answer. Then we would walk through the long-division process together verbally and write down the correct steps. Over time, she should be able to use her notes about her own thought process to correctly solve problems on her own. I want to emphasize to her the importance of attending on this day—we designed this together, and it's only going to be useful if she comes! Hopefully, she feels invested in the activity and feels a desire to participate in such personalized instruction. We can home in on where her "gaps" are in her mathematical understanding and hit those topics in a way that allows her to progress forward with her peers who don't struggle as much.

**Refer to the [Task 1 Rubric](#) for Textbox 1.2.2 and ask yourself:**

In the candidate's response, where is there evidence of the following?

- Does the candidate identify each Focus Student's cultural and linguistic assets, lived experiences, and academic strengths and learning needs?
- Where does the candidate explain how each of these two students contributes to the classroom's learning environment?

- Does the candidate identify and describe one possible instructional strategy and one learning activity that can be created together with each focus student to support that student?
- Where does the candidate explain how the identified strategy and activity reflect an understanding and appreciation of each focus student's cultural and linguistic assets lived experiences, academic strengths, and learning needs?

### Example 2: Did Not Meet/Partially Met Standards Level

- a. Student 1 is a very extroverted student. They could command the class and have on occasions for the worse. Student 1 has ADD and you can tell by how often they get up and is distracted by the things around him. They like to be the center of attention and have devoted themselves to be a class clown of sorts. This has caused a lot of stress in at least our mentor teacher. When Student 1 is focused the class runs smoother and really allows for all the students to learn better. But I don't always want to suppress students like Student 1, I want to use them to my advantage. If I can get students like Student 1 to care, they can bring a great morale boost to the class.

Student 2 can be a sharp student. They seem to be close with their family and when I first met them, they were distracted worrying about the loss of a family member. He struggles with the confidence that the steps they are taking is correct. When they were brave enough to share their thoughts, you can see the gears connecting in their mind. When students like Student 2 feel comfortable to speak in class that means that the environment is in the right state that students feel they can try without fear of being wrong. You can tell that family is important to Student 2, but that Student 2 tends to do activities on their own or with a sibling.

- b. With focus student 1 we decided on more group work as an instructional strategy with the learning activity being an interactive task. We would have the students working with no more that 3 other students in their area and have them work through to solve the task together. This will foster Student 1's desire to be involved with other students and take advantage of the extra energy that they have. The students will be able to create the mathematics through this task and feel a sense of accomplishment when they figure it out. I really feel that Student 1 will thrive in this atmosphere and it will also follow with their desire to keep things fun and entertaining. Student 1 really felt like this would be a good compromise to be able to work though the math and stay focused while not being required to keep quiet. Student 2 tends to understand the mathematics being taught but gets bored and lazy and makes simple mistakes due to that. By having the interactive environment Student 2 will be more engaged and less likely to let simple mistakes slip through.
- c. For Focus student 2 we created an instructional strategy of real-life problems. In conjunction with this a potential learning activity would be to have a task involving technology or video games as the student really connected with these in their everyday life. We agreed that this would provide an opportunity for all the students to be able to anchor their mathematical understanding in something more concrete. Student 2 felt like this would give them an opportunity to grasp the ideas sooner and would allow them to create their own connections. We could even go so far as use the lingo that is involved in video games and connect them to mathematical terms in a fun and interactive way.

Student 2 mostly just needs an opportunity to feel comfortable with the mathematics and we both feel this was a great solution.

**Refer to the [Task 1 Rubric](#) for Textbox 1.2.2 and ask yourself:**

In the candidate's response, where is there evidence of the following?

- Does the candidate identify each Focus Student's cultural and linguistic assets, lived experiences, and academic strengths and learning needs?
- Where does the candidate explain how each of these two students contributes to the classroom's learning environment?
- Does the candidate identify and describe one possible instructional strategy and one learning activity that can be created together with each focus student to support that student?
- Where does the candidate explain how the identified strategy and activity reflect an understanding and appreciation of each focus student's cultural and linguistic assets lived experiences, academic strengths, and learning needs?

**Suggestions for Using These Examples**

After writing your own rough draft response to the guiding prompts, ask the question, "Which parts of these examples are closest to what I have written?" Then read the 4 levels of the matching rubric (labeled with the textbox number) and decide which best matches your response. Use this information as you revise your own written commentary.

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