

PPAT[®] Assessment

Library of Examples – Science

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 10th grader who is a high achiever in the classroom. This student’s primary language is English. She is very active in two sports, tennis and basketball. Focus Student 1 is always willing to share answers with the class with confidence. Focus Student 1, is an active student in regard to participation, and she is a quick learner. This student has a typical home life and parents who are active with her academics. She does not have to work to support herself. While she is a science "rockstar", she does struggle with

grammar sometimes, and this is particularly noticeable when she does class assignments. She also struggles with test anxiety. Focus Student 1 is great at helping others when they need it. For example, when her lab group struggles with a task or a lab, she does a great job at keeping them on task. Focus Student 1 is a natural leader, and this encourages others to get their tasks done.

Focus Student 2 is a 11th grader who is retaking Biology as a direct result of failing the class last year. This student's primary language is Spanish, but he is also fluent in English. He is retaking more than one class this semester. Unlike Focus Student 1, this student is not involved in extracurricular activities and has a low interest in school. This student has a hard time turning assignments and working on assignments outside of class. Even though he is not involved in school activities, he does have a job so that he can help his family at home. His parents are inactive in regard to academics. Focus Student 2 is quiet and reserved when it comes to whole-class instruction and tends to be more outspoken in small group instruction. At first, he did not ask any questions, but now he is beginning to ask my cooperating teacher and I for help when he needs it. He is an active student when it comes to learning activities but can get off-task when he is near classmates that he is more familiar with. Fortunately, he is easily redirected when he does get off task. Focus Student 2 is phenomenal at working in groups and conducting lab activities. He is always willing to help and work collaboratively with his group. The willingness to collaborate helps encourage students around the classroom to collaborate as well.

- b. In order to meet the needs of Focus Student 1, I should simulate test situations before the actual unit test occurs so that this student can feel more confident when the real unit test comes. For example, I can give students short quizzes that are only graded on participation so that they can practice in the testing environment. The more exposed this student is to testing, the more comfortable they will be. When I am having students take simulated tests and actual unit tests, I should make sure the classroom environment is relaxed by adjusting to dimmer lighting, assuring the room is a comfortable temperature, and making sure there are no distractions in the room; all of these factors should help put her at ease. If the student still seems to be struggling with test taking, I can offer her extra time to take the test or even offer to administer the test orally to her. Oral tests will allow her to get away from the traditional testing environment that makes her nervous but will also allow her to be assessed appropriately.

In order to help with test anxiety, this student and I can brainstorm activities that would be appropriate for group and performance tests. As the class approaches the end of a unit, I should take the time to meet with the student and ask her which part of the unit might be appropriate for a group or performance test. The part of the test which is administered as a group or performance test would then be formulated by me. By having this student put input on what topic would best be suited for group or performance testing, I am allowing them to feel like they are in control of their learning. Before she gives me her final input, I would ask her to consult other students to see what they say. Focus Student 1 is a leader in the class. She can use her leadership to her advantage and ask her peers what they would possibly like to see as a group or performance tests. By creating a group or performance part of the unit tests, I am attempting to reduce her test anxiety by getting her away from traditional testing and formatting these tests in a way that suits her learning preferences.

- c. In order to meet the needs of Focus Student 2, I can try to emphasize group learning and collaboration. On his Student Information Sheet, this student indicates that he likes group activities. The group activities give him a chance to share his thoughts and ideas with others. I can also incorporate group practice and quizzes so that he may get to talk through the content with his peers. The talking aspect of group practice will allow him to be engaged and will allow me to gauge his knowledge on the content. It will show me how he is thinking and is an alternative to assigning homework that might not get turned in. I can help this student turn in more homework by sitting down and doing the assignment with him orally or even giving the option of doing the assignment with his shoulder partner.

A learning activity that this student and I can create together is a group project. In the class, I can have students work in groups to create a presentation to relate to a human impact on climate and the natural environment. I can give this student the opportunity to choose what issue the class will debate on and what they might need to formulate a strong argument. The student will also help me determine what roles each person in the group should have in the activity. This activity allows me to have more one-on-one time with this student. It also allows him to have a say in what the class needs to be investigating. He will be able to work in groups with his peers to investigate. By working in a group, Focus Student 1 is more inclined to share his ideas and learn more about the subject so his argument can be based on facts and logic.

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. My focus student 1 (FS1) comes from a culturally diverse household, as both of the parents have different cultures and ethnicities, where one parent is Hispanic and the other African American. With a student coming from a diverse background there are behaviors the student displays and interests that reflect both cultures. FS1 values respect and collaboration as FS1 is mostly quiet during class when the instructor is speaking, but when provided clear cues that the student can talk, the student is eager to work with their peers. The FS1's interests, such as cooking, favoring a subject with more prior knowledge in and preferring to play video games, reflect the student's reserved personality. Yet, the student's academic strengths are the fact that he is open to new ideas and is interested in learning new material, and is willing to learn in a variety of ways. However, FS1 could benefit from more individual instruction and more opportunities

to collaborate with other peers. Although FS1 is reserved in verbal communication, FS1 expresses their thoughts with their eyes convincingly. The student clearly expresses any confusion, which helps me know when to change my approach to teaching. Focus student 2 (FS2) is like FS1, in that the student respects the instructors and collaborates with their peers. However, in the classroom, this student is eager to respond to questions that the instructor presents. The student values concrete ideas, such as liking the subject of History and values collaboration more than working individually. The student also displays a varied background knowledge, which is evident in his responses and classroom participation. An academic strength that the student displays, as mentioned, is the fact that FS2 is eager to participate in the classroom during instruction and when working collaboratively. When a topic is taught, the student learns the idea much faster, the reason could be their interest in science. Often when FS2 shares a response, it needs to be corrected, so a learning need of the student is to reinforce ideas taught in the classroom, preferably through working with their peers.

- b. An instructional strategy that I could use to benefit FS1 is the use of peer collaboration.
- b. With this instructional strategy, the student is the focus of instruction and his/her learning comes from working in groups. Students with diverse backgrounds are able to learn from each other through their differences in ideas. A learning activity that we could create together is an in-class research assignment. FS1 could help me pick a topic and select questions that the class can investigate, such as in ecology. FS1 could then select partners for all of the groups, including FS1's, and can split questions between partners in their group and become "experts" in those questions. Then as a group, the peers share and discuss their answers. In a sense, the activity is like a Jigsaw, but the focal point of this activity is sharing ideas between a few students, rather than sharing ideas as a class.
- c. For FS2, I would use the instructional strategy of discovery-based learning., In this instructional strategy, learning is presented through a rigorous, hands-on approach, revolving around ideas relevant to the student. The student has a variety of ways of approaching this method of instruction, such as doing research and working with peers. A good learning activity would be an investigation of the human body systems. In a unit, the student can select a human body system to investigate, such as the cardiovascular system, and can start by leading a discussion on how the class can do an investigation. Once the student has an idea of how to do the investigation, that student will perform it, preferably with a partner. At the beginning of the activity, students may have an idea of how the system works. By investigating, questions that the student may have had will be answered throughout the investigation. As the student is working, the student reinforces those previous ideas.

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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