TASK 2: INSTRUCTION COMMENTARY

Respond to the prompts below (**no more than 6 single-spaced pages, including prompts**) by typing your responses within the brackets following each prompt. Do not delete or alter the prompts. Commentary pages exceeding the maximum will not be scored. You may insert **no more than 2 additional pages of supporting documentation** at the end of this file. These pages may include graphics, texts, or images that are not clearly visible in the video or a transcript for occasionally inaudible portions. These pages do not count toward your page total.

1. **List the learning experience(s) you have selected for the 2 video clips** you are submitting. Identify the learning experience(s) by plan day/number.

[I have selected some video highlights from the following two lessons:

- Video Clip 1: Learning Experience – Lesson 2: Plant Parts and Functions / Plant Needs
- Video Clip 2: Learning Experience – Lesson 3: "Concept Sort"

These are referenced throughout this commentary from the overall Video Clip 1 (from 00:00 to 09:59 minutes) in Lesson 2, and Video Clip 2, (from 00:00 to 04:55 minutes) in Lesson 3.]

2. **Promoting a Positive Learning Environment**

Refer to scenes in the video clips where you provided a positive learning environment.

a. How did you demonstrate mutual respect for, rapport with, and responsiveness to children with varied needs and backgrounds, and challenge children to engage in learning?

[RESPECT:

During video clip 1, I strived to exhibit a receptiveness with my students by prompting for active participation during this science/literacy lesson. I demonstrate mutual respect from 01:49 to 02:21 by quieting my voice and using positive reinforcement, by pointing out good behavior, "I really like how ("Student X") is being quiet and listening. I like how ("Student Y") is quiet and listening." Follari reminds prospective teachers to think about the handful of impactful teachers we have had in our lives. "Most likely you remember qualities of enthusiasm, energy, and genuine caring." (Follari, 262). It is with this in mind that I try to create a respectful environment. From 00:14 to 5:00 in Video Clip 1, I have respectfully considered my English Language Learner (ELL) and visual learners, by drawing the exhibit of the plant on the whiteboard. Throughout this whole Video Clip 1 (00:00 to 04:55), I have created a closer/more intimate learning environment by conducting this learning segment on the floor where we feel more like a collaborative group of researchers. It is my hope that as I give students more tasks stemming from their inquiries, I will help them feel like they are responsible for their own learning and that they can make some learning goals for themselves.

RAPPORT:

During video clip 1, I demonstrate how I establish a pleasant rapport. From 03:10 to 04:23, I garner responses from the class by having various questions readily available for them to engage in the discussion. In the small group (video clip 2 from 01:59 to 03:04), additional evidence of how I establish a rapport with my class is demonstrated by how I elicit input from more than one member of the small group, showing sincere interest in how they are explaining their reasoning and modeling how to get a discussion going by asking simple questions like, "Why would you put it (the word 2:18, "sail") there 2:18?" Noticing how one of the more advanced students (in the green jacket) is starting to work on his own, I interject to see if I can get him to engage in discussion with his peers. He then talks to the girls in the group, "Foods from plants. Why would we put berries there? Is a berry a food from a plant?" Then, I engage the boy in blue (Video 1 at 02:49 to 3:00), to join the conversation by asking him what he thinks about the "plant word" listed on the post-it in front of him. He responds, and after I have modeled some discussion starters, I see the girls engage in academic conversations (Video 1, 3:00 to 3:06). It is at this point that feel I have scaffolded their learning and can move on to the

next group while they do more collaborative work. It is important that I provide consultation during small group work to model how the perspectives of all children are important to a collective learning environment. Just as NAEYC advises, it is an important developmentally appropriate practice for children to have multiple opportunities to practice a new skill. Throughout these five lessons, I will be finding a variety of ways for children to use these new vocabulary words on plants. Having multiple opportunities to use the language in conversation, is a great step to being able to write terms and understand functions.

RESPONSIVENESS:

I have demonstrated responsiveness in Learning Experience-Lesson 2, by being reflective about what aspects worked well and could have used improvement in Lesson 1. One very engaging aspect in Lesson 1 was when I taught the class a song with movements to remember how they know a plant is a living thing. A few minutes prior to the snapshot in video clip 1, a student asks if they could sing that song again (and we did). Following that and during this video clip 1 from 04:49 to 07:55, I show responsiveness to student learning preferences, by incorporating another song. This time, the song mirrors the instruction I am giving on the needs of a plant.

I also provide responsiveness by considering differentiation for my students with a variety of learning needs. For my students who have behavioral challenges when sitting still, I try to provide some more active tasks; such as the physical process of moving to an area of the room (throughout Video Clip 2, Lesson 3, from 00:00 to 04:55), engaging in the physical task of arranging and sorting science terms (written on post-its), and adhering them to a large chart. Also, the way that I grouped my "expert groups" is that I have planned for some peer tutoring groups to take place. This will be beneficial to my struggling readers and my ELL student. Reading Rockets is an organization that compiles research-based reading strategies. They convey research from various sources such as the U.S. Department of Education that recommends, "One way to create effective literacy instruction for English learners in the elementary grades is to schedule regular peer assisted learning opportunities. Ensure that teachers of English learners devote approximately 90 minutes a week to instructional activities in which pairs of students at different ability levels or different English language proficiencies work together on academic tasks in a structured fashion. These activities should practice and extend material already taught." I very carefully put together these groups, knowing that my students could assist one another as they will primarily work in groups from Lesson 3 through Lesson 5.

PROVIDING A CHALLENGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:

I provide a challenging learning environment by building on the base knowledge that the leaf makes food (Video clip 1 from: 02:01 to 3:10) and then providing a captivating opportunity for my more science-savvy learners to acquire a new advanced term, "photosynthesis" and perhaps "chlorophyll" (Video clip 1 from 07:55 to 9:08). Often, a "whisper voice" elicits intrigue and thus; gains a great deal of engagement from all of the students. This was the last snippet of this learning segment, before switching locations to artistically put together materials to make a flower and label them with the names of both parts and function. Because there was enough repetition and varied modes of learning during my direct instruction, I expected that the students could complete this creative assessment without much difficulty. Also, in Video Clip 2, (1:02 to 4:35), I challenge the class not only to develop their language arts and science savvy, but create a small-group setting which provides students an opportunity to express varied perspectives, which places value on this social-emotional learning aspect as well.]

3. Engaging Children in Learning

Refer to examples from the video clips in your responses to the prompts.

a. Explain how your instruction engaged children in

- language and literacy development, **AND**
- active, multimodal learning

[LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT:

Through the lens of an interdisciplinary context, I marry literacy and science objectives into each of my five lessons. NAEYC will concur that this not only "fosters connections between concepts", but makes my learning experiences exciting and motivating. During Video Clip 2 (03:24 to 3:43), I show evidence of how children are developing their vocabulary skills by using the newly acquired science terms about plants, which I pulled from the prior read-aloud book, Planting the Wild Garden by Kathryn O. Galbraith. The students are manipulating these words and sorting them. This task helps them meet the literacy standard, "CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.1.5.A Sort words into categories (e.g., colors, clothing) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent." I ask questions to find out how the boys arrived at sorting six words (field, forest, sweater, yard, meadow, garden) under the category, "Places Plants Grow". The boy with his back to the camera, notices a potential error, "Sweater?" The boy with the star on his shirt moves it under, "How Seeds Travel" and I prompt them to explain their reasoning, "Why would that be there, Student A?" He points out that a sweater under the "Foods from Plants" category, "does not make sense and didn't seem to make sense under, "How seeds Travel"." Therefore, he proceeded to place this under "Places Plants Grow". However, I tried to help them recall the story. Specifically, at 04:01 to 04:34, one will notice that the boy with the star on his shirt, is working hard at trying to recall the term, "cocklebur", which had attached to the rabbit's coat in the prior story. He may have had some association with this from his experiences at home since he was referring to it as, "a "bur"…those little spiky things." I try to guide the boys into finding the right answer. After some work, I help connect the part from the book about the sweater and socks catching onto these cockleburs that carry seeds. The "Concept Sort" comprehension strategy provides me with a way to see how familiar the students are with topic and helps children use new vocabulary.

Additionally, I show evidence of how I engaged children in language and literacy development in Video Clip 1 (09:06 to 09:59), by asking them to manipulate labels of plant parts and plant functions and adhere them to their own flower creation. By working with the potentially new vocabulary they just learned, they are bolstering their understanding of both the word and the concept behind it. Toward the end of the clip, their last challenge from me is to take responsibility for their own learning (as I refer to them as super-scientist-investigators) and refer to a table display of age-appropriate and topic-centered books from which they will find one interesting fact to share about that type of plant.

ACTIVE AND MULTIMODAL LEARNING:

Rather than desk work, I designed Learning Experience-Lesson 3, to involve active skill-building work, by organizing groups to engage in discussion about new vocabulary and practice their sorting skills from a text we had just read, (Planting The Wild Garden, by Kathryn O. Galbraith). Evidence of this "Concept Sort" is displayed throughout Video Clip 2 (00:00 to 04:55) and is my genuine effort to build in an active multi-modal learning activity that not only suits those special students with issues sitting still, those who struggle with reading, and my ELL student, but also engages all students in meaningful work. This lesson is one of many which I modeled after an educational framework based on cognitive neuroscience, where a teacher will provide multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression- the Universal Design for Learning. As I mentioned in my planning commentary, "this kind of instruction is supported by Dr. D. W. Moore, whose research shows that 'rich and varied language experiences' along with "content-rich, collaborative tasks lead to consistent vocabulary growth".

Also, in Video Clip 1, I challenge the class to learn a lively song (04:48 to 07:57) in order to develop a further understanding of the needs of a plant, after we had brainstormed a list of what we thought those were (on the top right corner of the White board). The class sang along

and they asked to sing it a second time. I added movement to give visual cues upon this first introduction; however, I will re-introduce the song in later lessons, asking the children to add those movements in order to broaden their knowledge of these new concepts. Donovan and Pascale convey that, "The arts provide a variety of ways for students to use what scientists and mathematicians refer to as representational fluency- the ability to use different symbolic systems to represent meaning. A concept that grew out of science and math disciplines, representational fluency 'includes visualizing and conceptualizing transformation process abstractly…transforming physical sensory data into symbolic representations and vice versa…The arts provide opportunities for students to move between different representations of content." After having a degree in music, and being trained in a music and movement teacher program, I look forward to inserting musical elements in even more lesson plans in order to address the aural/musical, visual, and kinesthetic learners like I have in Lesson 2.

However, I will not stop there. I subscribe to Howard Gardner's theory that there are wide ranges of intelligences. Further aligning to his theory, during Video Clip 2 (00:00 to 4:55), my organization of small-groups demonstrates my effort to include those "interpersonal" learners too. This small-group "Concept Sort" also engages the "logical/mathematical" learners in linking logical categorization skills with literacy tasks. Furthermore, "intrapersonal" learners are challenged to be "me smart" in Video Clip 1 (09:41 to 09:55) when I ask them to do research from a new book on the table display. Lastly, I bring in live plants and seeds in later lessons, while in Lesson 2, Video Clip 1 (00:56 to 01:07) I refer to the celery on the display board from Lesson 1 that was brought in address the "naturalist" learner's interests. By giving attention to multimodal learning, it is my hope that each student can be intrinsically motivated and immersed in the flow of learning.]

b. Describe how your instruction linked children's development, prior learning, and personal, cultural, and community assets with new learning.

[During Lesson 2, Video Clip 1, there are 3 different ways that I display how children connect to their prior learning. First, at 00:00 to 00:47, I had prepared a three-panel documentation board with pictures, along with the life cycle cards they used to represent how a flower grows. These were from the science experiment on the prior lesson in this unit. At the beginning of this clip, I had just set the board down on the desk beneath the calendar, which you see to my left. (Supporting Documentation, page 7). Having this compilation of pictures, helps students visually recall the last lesson. Displaying documentation boards to show students' meaningful work, honors their participation in the learning process. This is a common practice with Reggio Emilia thinking, which inspired me to insert this material into this second lesson. Secondly, from 00:00 to 01:48, I demonstrate how I link instruction to prior knowledge by continuing to refer to the science experiment with celery in Learning Experience-Lesson 1, and asking questions about what function took place before their very eyes. Children responded with insightful answers and I could then build on their knowledge about it's function and convey the new knowledge that it is the "stem" of the plant. Lastly, I had planned to ask the children about about how we know a plant is living in order to review the last lesson. Before I could, one child requested to sing the song, "It is Living", which I taught in Lesson 1. To honor their mode of learning, I let them know that I once again integrated music so they could rehearse the needs of a plant. Just before Video Clip 1, we reviewed that song; however, from 05:17 to 07:54 in Video Clip 1, we learn the next song. When I integrate developmentally appropriate music, vocabulary, and science in order to bolster children's' knowledge (as evidenced in Video Clip 1, 05:17 to 07:54), I will not only make their learning more meaningful, but I will give students experiences they can easily share with their families and within their community.

4. Deepening Children's Learning during Instruction

Refer to examples from the video clips in your explanations.

a. Explain how you **elicited and built on children's responses** to promote children's language and literacy development through active learning.

[At 03:19 in Video Clip 2, one will notice how I facilitate interactions among children so they can ponder their own thinking and actively engage in the use of newly acquired academic language. At this point in the video and after hearing these words in the read-aloud book, Planting the Wild Garden, by Kathryn Galbraith, the students are grappling with where the word "sweater" fits under one of the three categories ("How seeds travel", "Where plants grow", or "Foods from Plants"). It was both theorists, John Dewey and Maria Montessori in the early 20th century, who stressed the importance of the active experience in learning. I elicited comments from the children by asking questions, "What made you think field, forest, sweater, garden, meadow, yard…are places plants grow?" I use a pleasant tone- not demeaning in any way- so that I show the students that I respect their thinking and want them to evaluate their own ability in order to figure this out. After they moved the "sweater" post-it correctly under "How seeds travel", I wanted them not only to get the right answer, but go beyond it and explain their reasoning.]

b. Explain how you made interdisciplinary connections in ways that deepen children's development of language and literacy.

[There are numerous goals for first graders to learn various foundational language skills including; reading, writing, speaking, and listening. I use an interdisciplinary approach to mesh literacy while learning science, which will bolster understanding in both areas. In Video Clip 2 throughout (00:00 to 4:55), children who are arranged in small groups, engage in discussion to deepen their understanding about various aspects of plants. Erikson describes the stage of development for young school-aged children as those who have succeeded past a sense of initiative and are eager to begin the sense of industry. Children want to be a part of their own learning. Students show this participation in their own learning by grappling with their own reasoning throughout Video Clip 2 (00:00 to 4:55), in order to sort science vocabulary into one of three appropriate categories. They pursue this task with abundant energy to achieve what Harlin and Rivkin describe as the, "satisfaction of accomplishment."

Children also develop their language in conjunction with a science lesson by using "plant concept" vocabulary expressed through music in Video Clip 1 from 04:54 to 07:54. Again, this interdisciplinary learning segment aligns with Dewey's and Montessori's theory that children need to have active learning experiences in order for information to be impactful.]

5. Analyzing Teaching

Refer to examples from the video clips in your responses to the prompts.

a. What changes would you make to your instruction to better support children's learning related to the central focus? Be sure to address the needs of all children, including those who need greater support or challenge.

Consider the variety of learners in your class/group who may require different strategies/supports (such as children with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, children at different points in the developmental continuum, and/or gifted children).

[To help visual learners as well as my ELL student, I would want to make an additional visual aid when playing the "Needs of a Plant" video/song (from 04:54 to 07:54 in Video Clip 1). I would write the five needs of a plant in large letters on an anchor chart. Just as we often do a

"turn and talk" comprehension strategy with a partner after a read-aloud, the students could "turn and sing", trying to add in the physical motions.

After the children are finished with their group "Concept Sort" in Video Clip 2 (04:30 to 04:54), I would consider handing out a basic worksheet page for individual work before I ask them to begin finding "concept words" from their "expert group" book totes. This sheet would have the three categories listed along with a word bank.]

b. Explain why you think these changes would improve children's learning. Support your explanation with evidence of children's learning **AND** principles from developmental theory and/or research.

[The visual aid that I refer to in 5a, Video Clip 1, would bolster learning of the spelling of these new terms, and help the children more readily read the words, and learn the lyrics. Also, Vygotsky refers to the distance between what a child can do on his own and what the child is able to with the help of someone else, as the zone of proximal development. By turning to a neighbor to practicing the song with motions, I would be able to evaluate how this active learning experience is within the zone of proximal development for some and perhaps not for others. With this knowledge, I can plan further strategies to accomplish my central focus, "Students can convey that there are many types of plants; they are living things and have certain needs." From the "Concept Sort" learning experience in Video Clip 2, (to assist especially those who are struggling with reading and writing), the practice of transferring the information from the large chart to their own paper could cement the learning that took place within the small group.

Considering the variability of learners within my classroom this year and in future years, I will need to reflect on how successful I was using UDL (Universal Design for Learning), which will prompt me to be flexible in using multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement. By adding both the visual aid, and another partner activity in Lesson 2, as well as a written follow-up worksheet in Lesson 3, I could more thoroughly align with the UDL principles.]

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION:

The documentation board (Video Clip 1, in the background) which was displayed to students on Learning Experience-Lesson 2, containing excerpts from Lesson 1.

References:

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