TASK 1: PLANNING COMMENTARY

Respond to the prompts below (**no more than 9 single-spaced pages, including prompts)** by typing your responses within the brackets. Do not delete or alter the prompts. Pages exceeding the maximum will not be scored.

1. **Central Focus**

   a. Describe the central focus for the learning segment.

[The central focus for the entire learning segment is the understanding and utilization of non-fiction text features. Over the course of 3 lessons, students will learn all about the various non-fiction text features, use them to perform their own research, and lastly use the skills they have learned to take their research to create a page in a non-fiction text book. I selected this focus and content in response to the need for students to gain the knowledge and skills to be able to improve their reading comprehension of all type of texts. By the end of the learning segment, students will have gained a better understanding of an author's purpose for using text structure and how it organizes the information being presented, as well as strategies for how to identify it. Additionally, students will learn how to effectively recognize and implement the use of non-fiction text in their own writing through the creation of a class-made non-fiction text. The purpose for the content of each lesson is to slowly build up the students' knowledge base and to form a strong foundation of comprehension for reading text structure in order to proceed on to the writing aspect of creating original pieces. This focus for the lesson segment is developmentally appropriate for this 1st grade classroom, as it is being implemented through the teaching of a tooth study unit. By using non-fiction texts that are age-appropriate for students, and at a level that they easily understand, they will be able to use all of the nine text features they have learned about. Thus, this segment fits in perfectly within the scope of units that they have learned throughout the year.]

   b. Given the central focus, describe how the standards and learning objectives within your learning segment promote children's

   ■ active and multimodal nature of learning

   ■ language and literacy development in an interdisciplinary context

[The standards and learning objectives within my learning segment comprehensively address the active and multimodal nature of learning, and language and literacy development in an interdisciplinary context. Theorist John Dewey believed that students learn best through hands-on experiences and being able to manipulate and work with the materials being presented. The active and multimodal nature of learning presented in this learning segment allows for students to use this hands-on approach in their own learning. They are given multiple opportunities to participate verbally, within small groups, and to manipulate the materials on their own. Students become active in their learning through being able to share their thoughts during a class meeting time, by writing their questions down on post-it notes, and by working in small research groups with other peers. The language and literacy development in an interdisciplinary context is available for students through the use of a scientific topic that allows the implementation of literacy-based skills. By completing a unit of study about teeth, students are given the opportunity to explore and use non-fiction texts within a science-based unit.]

   c. Explain how your instructional plans build on each other to make connections between the active and multimodal nature of young children's learning and their language and literacy development.

[The lessons are strategically sequenced to advance as time goes on. The first lesson introduces non-fiction text features and the identifying factors for each feature. Students become familiar with the content to solidify their knowledge base for the subsequent lessons.

They have practice exploring non-fiction texts by completing a non-fiction text scavenger hunt where they are required to correctly identify the nine features they have learned about. Educational theorist, Howard Gardner states that children learn through different modalities, which he calls, "multiple intelligences". This is why each learning experience encompasses a myriad of different intelligences. This lesson allows students to interact directly with the text and is beneficial for all types of learners as it is implemented in a way that targets many learning styles. Next, in lesson 2 students have continued practice with non-fiction texts as a teacher reads a book aloud to the class, and models the appropriate way in which to find information. Also, in this lesson students are able to interact with their ideas by writing their own questions on post-it notes to be displayed for the class. The read-aloud and modeling done by the teacher gives students the language required to complete the task and thus enhances their literacy and language development. Finally, lesson 3 requires students to take the knowledge they have learned about non-fiction texts, and implement it into their own research study. This lesson targets many learning capacities as it incorporates visual, audial, interpersonal and kinesthetic learning. Students are able to implement the interpersonal skills and abilities appropriate for their age through working in small groups. The standards addressed in these lessons require constant growth and improvement on the students' part, and is assessed throughout each lesson as well as at the end of each lesson. All the lessons build up to the final culmination of the segment where students are asked to perform research about teeth to create their own page of a non-fiction text, and to exhibit understanding of all that was taught and learned. Thus, each day is sequenced, developmental, and scaffolded to build proficiency.

In this lesson segment, students will develop competencies in reading and interpersonal relationship contexts. The competencies, based on the standards, are the skills and strategies that students will learn in order to identify features within non-fiction texts, how to use non-fiction texts to perform their own research, and how to work in a small group in order to show their ability to create their own non-fiction page of a book. Based on the aforementioned points, it is crucial that the learning segment focuses not only on reading but also on interpersonal skills because the developmentally appropriate skills that students are expected to be building in 1st grade are all about making connections between reading and everyday life encounters to show students what it means to be a life-long learner. Students are not only expected to be learning to become more proficient readers, but also to sharpen their listening and speaking skills. The students will have extensive support going through the steps of these processes by following clear criteria for success for each learning experience. So they go from first reading the text, and they are then scaffolded into the process of creating their own non-fiction text portion.**]**

    d. Describe what was done (or could be done) to construct a physical learning environment that supports the active and multimodal nature of young children's language and literacy development.

[The physical environment available for students is presented through the use of students being able to interact with non-fiction texts through the use of a scavenger hunt, creating their own posters that will act as pages in a non-fiction text, using post-it notes to interact with chart paper, and by enhancing students' interpersonal relationships through the use of meetings and small-group activities. Through all of these activities, students will be able to implement the vocabulary they have learned for this lesson – particularly in relationship to the words used to describe non-fiction text features. The vocabulary words are always clearly posted, and children can refer to them at any time in order to refresh their memories or to see a visual representation of a word that they may not recall.]

2. Knowledge of Children to Inform Teaching

    For each of the prompts below (2a–c), describe what you know about the children in **your** class **with respect to the central focus** of the learning segment.

Consider the variety of learners in your class who may require different strategies/support (e.g., children with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, children at different points in the developmental continuum, struggling readers, children who are underperforming or those with gaps in academic knowledge, and/or gifted children).

a. **Your** children's development **related to the central focus**—What do you know about the children's

- social and emotional development
- cognitive and physical development
- language development for communication

[Due to the open nature of the school, students are accustomed to working in small group settings for reading, math and writing. This allows students to constantly enhance their interpersonal relationship and **social** skills as the teacher frequently models the relevant language that will be used, and the children have the ability to implement these skills on an on-going basis. B.F. Skinner believed children acquire language by association, imitation and reinforcement. In addition, according to Jean Piaget, students are currently between preoperational and operational stages of development. This means that students are often able to make connections between themselves and those around them, but are also often very self-centered and do not see others as sensitive beings such as themselves. The **emotional** needs of the students of the class vary. Some students are able to listen closely to instructions and take on tasks independently, however some students are less emotionally stable and have self-esteem issues which requires them to ask for clarification from the teacher, and more guidance throughout the assignment. I have created a positive and safe environment in which it is my goal to make all students feel success at their own level, and these students feel very comfortable coming to ask me for help. By introducing the activities in whole-group sessions, students do not have to feel that they are at a higher or lower learning level than other students in the class since they are all being addressed as one. Since there are quite a few students in the class with delays in **language development** for communication and language processing, the visual posting of the criteria for success with words and pictures will allow these students to clearly see the nine non-fiction text features at all times including the words and picture representations (Skinner). Students with various physical needs and receive occupational or physical therapy to help build their fine and gross motor skills are given many opportunities to use Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences where they are able to work using kinesthetic approaches as well as audio, visual and interpersonal styles of learning. I will be sure to monitor all students closely in order to ensure their understanding through the use of constant assessment and implementation of adaptations as needed.]

b. Prior learning and prerequisite skills related to language and literacy development—**Cite evidence of what the children know, what they can do, and what they are learning to do related to language and literacy development.**

[Each learning experience is based on children's prior knowledge and incorporates their level of language and literacy development. Students are all able to identify the difference between fiction and non-fiction texts, and often ask questions such as: "Is this a real story?" while reading. This shows students' curiosity and availability to understand the different types of literature that is available for them. In relationship to language and literacy development, all students work in small-group settings with no more than 7-8 students present at any given time. Within these groups, students are further broken into groups of 2-3 students where they will practice implementing a specific skill they have learned. This consistent exposure to small-group instruction and work will allow students to easily transition into the latter part of this

learning segment where they are required to work in small groups to create a page in a non-fiction text. It is clear that students can ask and answer questions, as they have their ability to show curiosity in their learning through the completion of a KWH chart in lessons one and two, where students have stated what they know about teeth, what they want to know about teeth, and how they will receive the information they are curious about. In addition, even though students come from many different levels in their literacy development, the programs implemented in our school (Houghton-Mifflin and PAF) all begin with the teaching of short vowel sounds. The Houghton-Mifflin Reading program moves at a much faster pace than the phonics-based PAF program, but all students learn in the same manner as far as phonemic acquisition.]

c. Personal/cultural/community assets—**What do you know about your children's everyday experiences, cultural backgrounds and practices, and interests?**

[The students in this class primarily come from one community since this is a religious school. Students typically come from homes with a higher socio-economic status, and parents who work in professional settings that require high levels of education. Most students were born in this country, but of those who are ELL's, they are typically all from the same country as it is directly related to the religious affiliation of the school. The school is a community in and of itself. While many of the students do reside in the general proximity of the school, there is a great school-to-home connection made by administrators and teachers alike. The way in which this school runs is very similar to the theories of Uri Bronfenbrenner. Bronfenbrenner believes that the community in which a child lives, and his/her involvement within that community will affect all aspects of the child's life. By creating a school in which each and every child feels welcomed and safe, children are immediately set up for success. The nature of the school is very open both physically and also open to the community at large. The open school model where there are no formal walls or doors allows for a free flow of students and staff throughout the building. This flow allows all people within the school to feel welcomed and safe in any area. Very often, parents, grandparents, and other extended family members come in for a quick visit. This allows students to feel even more safe and at-home since they know their family members are a part of their school community as well. While most children come from the same cultural background, it is still important to create a culturally responsive classroom. This is done by implementing Responsive Classroom's Morning Meeting model for a daily meeting time. The Morning Meeting includes a daily meeting in which students and teachers engage in a greeting, sharing time, group activity, and a morning message. This not only adds routine and continuity to the daily schedule, but also allows for the children to feel as if though they are part of a classroom community as well as a school community, and a community at large.]

3. **Supporting Children's Development and Learning**

Respond to prompts 3a–c below. To support your justifications, refer to the instructional materials and learning experience plans you have included as part of Task 1. In addition, **use principles from research and/or developmental theory to support your explanations**.

a. Justify how your understanding of the children's development, prior learning, and personal/cultural/community assets (from prompts 2a–c above) guided your choice or adaptation of learning experiences and materials. Be explicit about the connections between the learning tasks and children's prior learning, assets, and research/developmental theory.

[The decision to teach this learning segment was influenced by the students' stage of development and areas of interest in conjunction with the Common Core State Standards. During this stage of their lives, first graders have gone through many different transitional periods. One change children are encountering at this stage is losing their baby teeth at a rapid

rate. According to the constructivist theory, learning should be based on real-life events that occur in a student's life. By implementing a unit of study about teeth in conjunction with learning about non-fiction texts, students are able to have a more clear understanding of what is happening to their bodies in real time, as well as learn life-long literacy skills through the understanding of different non-fiction text features. The constructivist-style classroom believes that what children currently believe (whether it is accurate or inaccurate) is important. The simple curiosity children hold about learning and about the world around them holds great rank in their learning process. Through the "K" part of the KWH chart, students stated "What I Know About Teeth." Whether or not their responses were accurate, they were still posted on the chart paper for all students to see, since this part of the learning process is so important.   ]

b.   Describe and justify why your instructional strategies and planned supports are appropriate for all of **the children who participate in your learning segment, including individuals with specific learning needs**.

Consider children with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, children at different points in the developmental continuum, struggling readers, and/or gifted children.

[Since all learning experiences within the learning segment begin with a whole-group discussion activity, I am able to pre-teach some students depending on their needs. Specifically, students with audio-processing delays, speech interferences, or ELL's, are given a brief and private introduction to the topic so that they will be prepared for the whole-group lesson. For example, when first asking a question to the whole class, I allow the students to have 3-5 seconds of think time before they are allowed to raise their hands. This enhances student participation regardless of their academic level. ELL's and students with language and auditory processing disorders often benefit from having more time to collect their thoughts. However, gifted children will often raise their hands immediately or blurt out answers. In order to decrease the academic gap within the classroom, providing students with this "think time" gives more students an opportunity to share their thoughts, and causes less intimidation for the students who can't answer questions immediately. In addition, once each vocabulary word or concept has been presented, visual cues are always available on the SmartBoard while students are engaged in the activities within this learning segment. This gives students a chance to see visual representations of words, along with the written word next to it. In addition to providing students with language support, students who have difficulty sitting in a meeting are given the opportunity to sit in a chair to allow their bodies to be more comfortable, and provide the students with a higher rate of success and learning. Many of the students in my class who receive occupational therapy often have a difficult time sitting in one position, especially for extended periods of time. By implementing kinesthetic activities, students will be able to move freely around the classroom area, and work in positions and ways that they are most comfortable and work best for them.]

c.   Describe common developmental approximations[1] or misunderstandings that pertain to the learning experiences you are planning for the children and how you plan to address them.

[A common misunderstanding that pertains to this learning segment is that text features are the same within fiction and non-fiction texts. This proves to be particularly confusing upon the first non-fiction text vocabulary word of "title." Students often know that all books have a title, and therefore can become confused when being asked to understand the difference between a fiction and non-fiction text. While there are some features that overlap between the 2 genres, there is a fundamental difference that students must understand from the start. I will address

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[1] For example, common beginning or transitional language errors or other attempts to use skills or processes just beyond a child's current level/capability.

this common misconception by taking the time at the introduction of the first lesson to review the fundamental differences between fiction and non-fiction texts through visually showing students two types of text about the same topic. One will be fictional, and I will use the term "story" when explaining that the non-fiction text gives information, but the fictional text tells a story. Another common misconception that students may make when talking about non-fiction text structure is that they may say something like "different stories can have different features." Some may overlook this error in language, but it highlights an important misconception that must be clarified. That is to say that it is not that *stories* can have different structures but rather that *texts* can have different structures. What students don't realize is that when we say "story," it automatically implies a fictional piece of literature. Instead, students should be encouraged to use the word "text". It is important to avoid having students fall into the habit of saying stories rather than texts, so I will also emphasize this at the beginning of the learning segment, and I will also be sure to address it if a student mistakenly says something like it throughout the lesson.]

4. Supporting Children's Language Development

Respond to prompts 4a–c below by referring to key vocabulary[2] for the learning segment.

a. Identify the vocabulary (i.e., **developmentally appropriate** sounds, words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs) that will support children's learning in the planned learning experiences.

[The academic language that students will learn through this learning segment are related to the nine features of a non-fiction text, and the high frequency words found throughout the tooth study. These words include: title, table of contents, photograph, labeled diagram, index, glossary, find more information, caption, bold words, cavity, healthy, teeth, roots, gum, pulp, dentin, enamel, crown, incisor, canine, molar, permanent, tusks, vitamins, calcium and plaque. All of these words will be presented to the students with picture prompts and/or verbal explanations of each word. The nine features of a non-fiction text vocabulary words will be presented in learning experience 1, where students will embark on a scavenger hunt to find the different parts of the text. The other vocabulary words that pertain primarily to teeth will be found through the use of student research by using non-fiction texts about teeth to answer questions they have asked.]

b. Identify a key learning experience from the learning segment plans that provides children with opportunities to develop, practice, and/or use the vocabulary identified in prompt 4a. (Identify the plan day/number.)

Consider the range of children's language development—what do children already know, what are they struggling with, and/or what is new to them?

[Learning experience 1 provides students with opportunities to develop and practice their newly acquired vocabulary that they will continue to use throughout the learning segment, and students' learning in the future. The vocabulary words they will acquire are directly related to the non-fiction texts they will be using through their tooth study unit, as well as within their Houghton-Mifflin reading program. While students are learning about non-fiction texts in the tooth unit, the Houghton-Mifflin program presents a non-fiction exploration at the same time. This allows for double exposure and repetition of key words, which is highly recommended by theorist Skinner in order for students to gain retention about the topic.]

c. **Language Supports**

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[2] Developmentally appropriate sounds, words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that you want children to use or create to engage in the learning experience.

Refer to your plans and instructional materials as needed in your response to the prompt below.

- Describe the instructional supports (during and/or prior to the learning experience) that help children develop and use the vocabulary identified in prompt 4a.

[The main instructional support that I have chosen to use throughout my learning segment is the listed criteria for success that contains words with images that will help students recall the nine different vocabulary words of the features of a non-fiction text that they have learned. By using the same pictures and words over and over, students will become familiar with the words through teacher reference and constant referral to them. It is available for students to refer back to at all times as it will be presented on the SmartBoard, as well as on laminated copies provided for students at each table, and the reason for this is that sometimes students may feel stuck because they don't remember the exact words or components, and they have trouble moving forward. With the criteria for success in clear view, students will constantly have that visual reminder that they can look back at to refresh their memory. The assignments/ activities given to them are not meant to be like exams where they are tested on their memory of the information, because they have only just begun to learn about the topic of non-fiction text features. So during the research activity, students can always look back to the criteria for success in front of the classroom to remind themselves of some of the signal words for each feature or some of the self-questions that they could ask in order to figure out what they should do next.]

5. **Monitoring Children's Learning**

   In response to the prompts below, refer to the assessments you will submit as part of the materials for Task 1.

   a.   Describe how your planned formal and informal assessments will provide direct evidence of multiple modalities to monitor children's learning of language and literacy **throughout** the learning segment.

[Throughout the learning segment, there will be multiple opportunities for informal and formal assessments. For example, in Learning Experience 1 I will assess students through using a simple checklist with three columns to determine whether students are able to complete a task "independently", "with peer-support" or "with teacher-support". It is important for me as the teacher to see which students understood the instructions and the lesson well enough to complete the task independently. This includes the accommodations made for students with special needs and learning requirements.

For Learning Experience 2, I will assess students' questions that were written on post-it notes to make sure they are relevant to the criteria, which requires students to ask questions about teeth. If there are students who are not able to ask questions about teeth, it will show me that a review and a different approach are necessary to accurately express the learning objective.

The final assessments that will be done through Learning Experience 3 – a culminating activity – are both formal and informal. The informal assessment of this task is making sure that students choose non-fiction texts that will allow them to answer their questions. The ability to do this will prove that students can use either the index or glossary of a non-fiction text to find the information they are looking for. This will show that students have learned the different functions of the nine features of non-fiction texts that were learned. The formal assessment for the entire learning segment will be completed through the final activity where students will create a class-made non-fiction text about teeth. Students will be working in small groups, and will need to meet four specific criteria for success. These include: a title, 2-3 captions on the page where students will write the information they have researched about the topic, at least one photograph

and/or labeled diagram that is relevant to the research topic, and bold words which are words that the reader may be unsure of, and will be further explained in the glossary.]

    b. Explain how the design or adaptation of your planned assessments allows children with specific needs to demonstrate their learning.

> Consider all children along the continuum of development (including children with IEPs or 504 plans, English language learners, struggling readers, and/or gifted children).

[As mentioned previously, the learning needs of all students were considered when writing the learning segment. Assessments were also adapted to meet children where they are on the learning continuum.]