

2. Describe what you know about your students.

a. Describe what students know, what they can do, what they are learning to do (e.g., prior knowledge, key skills, developmental levels).

Fifth graders are able to read and comprehend nonfiction texts with guidance (how to find important details, vocabulary). They understand that an ecosystem is like an environment, but have varying understandings about what can be considered an ecosystem.

Students are able to take simple notes but may need assistance and examples of good observation and note-taking skills. 5th graders have good motor skills and can more easily work with tools without constant help from the teacher. There will be some aspects of building the aquariums and terrariums that will need to have been completed before the lessons begin. Students have a basic understanding of what a food chain is, but may not know that certain types of organisms have different roles in their ecosystem. The learners know that humans have had a negative impact on nature and are able to come up with solutions to problems with pollution.

My students have a harder time with abstract, open-ended questions, and like to have very specific answers to look for.

b. Describe your students' language development, including abilities to understand and produce oral and written language in English.

Children at this age should be able to draw conclusions in subject area activities after listening during a lesson. 5th graders should be able to listen effectively to conversations and discussions in order to form opinions and their own definitions based on the information given. They will begin to express themselves more effectively and learn how to plan oral presentations.

Students should know how to talk about the main points of a subject area. During presentations learners can maintain eye contact and use facial expressions, gestures, and appropriate voice. They should also be able to integrate new vocabulary in oral and written contexts. When learning new vocabulary, 5th graders should be able to infer the meaning of words by analyzing suffixes, prefixes, root words, and context clues. They should be able to use reference materials to support opinions and to prioritize information according to the purpose of reading.

<https://www.speechbuddy.com/blog/language-development/development-chart-speech-and-language-from-3rd-5th-grade/>

<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/fifthgrade/>

c. Describe students' social and emotional development (e.g., relationships with each other; abilities in self expression, collaboration, etc.).

Children in fifth grade are really looking for independence. 5th graders are learning how to learn, and are needing more guided instruction rather than direct teaching. They are starting to become more dependable and trustworthy. These students are ready to take on more responsibility for their own learning, and are more easily able to keep track of homework assignments on their own. 5th grade students are slowly learning to accept responsibilities for their own failures and mistakes. They are beginning to see their own role in their mistakes, and therefore are gaining skills necessary to be open to constructive criticism, notes and editing from their teacher. These students are very aware of the concept of "fairness". Although sometimes this can be a negative thing, they can use this in a positive way. Since they are understanding the concept of "fairness", they are also starting to understand why not everything has to be exactly equal amongst students. They want to be with their friends and often feel upset when they feel they are not part of the crowd. Many of them seek to have one or two "best" friends and are even starting to develop crushes. Their social life and who they are friends with is very important to them and they feel it defines them.

d. Describe family/community/cultural assets (e.g., cultural norms, student interests, relevant experiences and resources).

Fargo is the largest city in the state of North Dakota. It is a cultural, retail, health care, educational, and industrial center. The racial makeup of the city is 90.2% White, 2.7% African American, 3.0% Asian, 1.4% Native American, 0.6% from

other races, and 2.1% from two or more races. At Bennett Elementary, many of the parents are employed by Sanford Health, Essentia Health, Fargo Public Schools, and Microsoft. Students at the school are very interested in technology. Many of them have cell phones and seem to love any chance to be on the computers or to play with the iPads. Every year the 5th graders go to the Science Center in Clay County Minnesota. There they are able to see first hand the different types of ecosystems they can find throughout the area. I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to apply knowledge used in this unit. In my classroom, students seem to prefer kinesthetic or hands on activities. With this information as well as my knowledge about technology, I want to create a unit where students can explore ecosystems with actively engaging lessons that will build up to their Science Center Field Trip.

e. Describe subgroups and individual requiring differentiated instruction (SPED, Title 1, ELL, Gifted and Talented, etc.).

Within my classroom I have two students who were formerly ELL, one Gifted and Talented (although there are 2 more who I would classify as gifted/talented), one who sees a counselor for social issues (getting along with/working well with others), and two students who are on IEPs for reading and math.

ELL—Although these students are no longer technically in the ELL program, they still have a hard time with fluency in reading and learning new vocabulary. It will be important when teaching vocabulary to give students a lot of practice with using the vocabulary in different contexts and making sure I am continuing to incorporate the new vocabulary throughout the unit.

Gifted & Talented—In order to keep these students engaged and continuing their learning throughout the unit, I will be needing to come up with higher order thinking questions to probe for deeper meaning and understanding. If students seem to have mastered a concept, I will be asking them to do an alternative enrichment activity, which will allow them to gain new information and apply it in various contexts.

Social Issues—This student has a hard time finding purpose in activities and does not like to work with others. I will need to make sure I provide opportunities for students to choose ‘working individually’ as an option. I will also make sure to have his ecosystems partner be someone he tends to get along with as well as someone who is friendly and shows an appreciation for his interests. IEPs—These students have trouble with fluency and comprehension in their reading. It will be important for me to explicitly teach vocabulary and use it throughout the rest of the unit. I will also be asking questions to probe for understanding and for use of the new vocabulary. These students will need help reading some of the formal assessments in order to complete tasks, and will be asked to give oral responses or write bulleted lists to show their understanding.

3. Describe how this knowledge influenced your planning.

a. Describe how this knowledge influenced your choice of strategies to engage all students.

Every classroom is different, every grade level is different, and every child learns differently. As I planned my spelling/reading unit, I took into account each student in the class and how the students learn best. At the second grade level, I knew I wanted to make my lesson unit fun, engaging, and interactive. I want each student to be successful and looked closely at each accommodation the students would need. I not only looked at the accommodations of my ELL, IEP, and gifted students, but looked at how the regular education students learned as well. Developmentally, I want the lesson unit to engage each student so they will not only learn the material, but understand the concepts behind what they are learning. I wanted to bring in many different forms of learning from visual, kinesthetic, as well as auditory to reach all learners. I will be using the Smartboard, websites, hands-on foldables, graphic organizers, learning games, as well as songs and read-alouds on CDs to reach all styles of learning.

b. Describe how this knowledge influenced your choice of strategies for scaffolding academic language. (Rubric 4 in Planning)

Children learn best when they are allowed to be interactive with the teacher, as well as with their classmates. I made sure to incorporate many higher-order thinking questions, interactive games and activities, as well as give them the opportunity to work together. I will be modeling good language development in my lesson unit, providing them with quality feedback throughout the week, and allowing them many opportunities to express themselves with me and with their peers. I will accomplish this through my bingo game, which is done as a group, vocabulary foldables they will work together on to

develop academic language, graphic organizers to allow them to express their thoughts on the lesson content, as well as read-alouds and partner reading. Throughout the

week I will look for opportunities to utilize student's strengths within individual group time. I will provide diversity within groups and whole class time to model scaffolding of good language development. I have also made sure that the academic language I will be teaching is developmentally appropriate and pertinent not only to grade level, but focused on my lesson unit as well.

c. Describe how this knowledge influenced your choice of activities for differentiating instruction.

When considering the different ways to differentiate instruction, my focus was driven by the students on IEPs, who are gifted and the ELL student in the class first. As I wrote my lesson plans, I made sure to provide the gifted student with extended reading passages, challenge words on the spelling list, opportunities to model language development, while making sure the challenges I was giving this student were challenging, yet reachable. For the students on IEPs, I made sure the activities I was using could provide all accommodations needed to meet their IEP goals. Worksheets were shortened, paraprofessionals were contacted to aid during certain activities, as well time was considered to allow them the necessary time to be successful. The ELL student will be provided many opportunities to interact with her classmates, develop her expressive language, and will have a translator during certain activities to help her with comprehension. After the necessary accommodations were considered, my focus was on the age level of my students, as well as their background knowledge. I wanted my lesson unit to be fun, engaging, and interactive. I want the students to have fun while they learn, so I made sure to incorporate activities that would include all styles of learning. I have included hands-on activities, auditory activities, cooperative learning activities, as well as visual activities.