

Contextual Information and Student Learning Adaptations (Continued)

Student Characteristics:

Describe the developmental characteristics of students in your classroom.

The students in the 6th grade class are at a slightly lower cognitive development compared to your average 6th graders. They are still at a cognitive stage of a beginning 6th grader as opposed to that of one in their second semester. They are still in the concrete operational stage, meaning that more abstract ideas will need to be approached in ways that the students can grasp. There is a large gap in cognitive development, partially due to students being further along than others and starting to grasp the abstract more clearly. Physically, the students are just starting to really hit puberty. Along with this comes social changes. They are transitioning from the “gross” stage of viewing the opposite sex to having “crushes”. This affects their interactions in the classroom on a daily basis. The males are feeling the need to prove themselves, while the females are beginning to hit that point where they have insecurities and every-changing attitudes. The students seek to be treated as young adults in the classroom but at times lack the maturity that is required to earn this right.

Highlight the prior knowledge and interests of students in your classroom.

The students spent their time in music this year studying some basic musical theory as well as guitar. There are many students that are in instrumental music classes or after-school choir, so there is a broad basis for musical knowledge their as well as an interest. They have had six years of general music, so there is a lot of prior knowledge available in the basics of music, though these may need to be reviewed. The biggest interest for students is something different – so much of elementary general music is the same and they are looking for a different and broad challenge. The students also have a large interest in technology, which will be good to incorporate in the classroom.

Describe the implications these characteristics have on planning and instruction.

Knowing what I do about the students’ developmental characteristics, it will be important to do a lot of grouping students on my own. With them not quite having hit that maturity and learned all proper manners as well as with the different stages of social development in regards to puberty, there can be a lot of hurt feelings as students pick their groups and self-interact. While there are times that they may be allowed to group, it will also be important to group them for larger projects. This will also help cover cognitive development ranges and allow for students to develop through peer-support. These students are very social right now, which will make group work and cooperative learning an effective way to support their development.

Environmental Factors:

Describe district, school, and classroom environmental factors impacting the quality of education for all of your students.

The Manhattan school district is a strong school district for learning and the arts are supported pretty well. There are many new teachers as well as older teachers with the mix of town people and fresh graduates. There are also many student aides and interns throughout the buildings because of the university, which adds additional resources for the students. The school district is developing in reference to technology, but is behind the times. Bluemont is especially this way. Though there is a smart-projector installed in the classroom, it is not configured for the board, and therefore can only be used as a regular projector and document screen. They have recently purchased iPad carts, which can be checked out and used. There are special education and para support available. Bluemont is a Title I school and also has a gifted teacher on staff for those students that meet those needs. The students have music class twice a week for 45 minutes through all grades, K-6.

Describe community and family environmental factors impacting the quality of education for all of your students.

Manhattan is a pretty transient community between the university and Fort Riley. Students are in and out of the school district at a pretty rapid pace. The community of students at Bluemont is also pretty low-income, with 55% of students on Free/Reduced lunches. Many students cannot participate in after-school activities because of expectations to be home taking care of siblings. Some students are lacking in necessary home support to keep up with school work as well. When preparing for concerts, some students can not afford nice clothes and jeans and a t-shirt is the best that they can come in.

Describe the implications these factors have on planning and instruction.

It is important to do the majority of teaching in class. When possible, I would strive to bring in technology to allow the students the experiences that they may not have at home. With class meeting times being so spaced out, it is important to be prepared to review material often. This can also help to fill in students who may come into the class mid-unit. When asking students to do projects or homework outside of school, it is important to not ask them to spend too much time or to require any monetary investment.